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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AS A COMMUNITY OF THREE CONSTITUTIVE PEOPLES ON A CONFEDERATE BASIS (ON CROATIAN POLICIES TOWARD BIH DURING THE CROATIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE)

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This work presents the issue of the Croatian policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from 1990 to 1996. In regard to the sources required to form an understanding of and being able to contextualize the Croatian policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to single out the contents of the meeting held in the Office of the President of Croatia on May 11, 1993. On that occasion, President Tuđman spoke about “the problems relating to the Croatian-Muslim conflicts in Bosnia”, about continued existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and about Bosnia and Herzegovina’s internal system of governance. The meeting was closed to the public and was held immediately after the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) had launched an attack on the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) in Mostar. In the concluding segment of this work key facts about the role of the Republic of Croatia and Croats in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina are laid out in chronological order. These facts should not be ignored in scholarly analyses about the Croatian policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period under discussion.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina; Croatian policies; 1990 – 1996; Franjo Tuđman; Croatian – Muslim Conflict

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Introduction

The war in former Yugoslavia, or, in other words, in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for a brief period in Slovenia, in the 1990s, was caused by Serbian policies grounded in the revival of the greater Serbian policies and by the desire of the Serbian leadership to achieve hegemony, by hook or by crook, in the Yugoslav Federation.¹

When analyzing the Croatian policies towards BiH one would be amiss to gloss over the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is an independent and sovereign state, in which Croats are an indigenous and constitutive people and equal to the other two constitutive peoples – Serbs and Muslims (Bosniaks).²

¹ Davor Marijan, Ante Nazor, Ante Jelić, and Zlatan Mijo Kolakušić, *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini, 1991. - 1995. (Pregled političkih i vojnih događaja u Hrvatskoj i BiH s posebnim osvrtom na muslimansko-hrvatski sukob u BiH te popis ubijenih civila Hrvata u BiH i zarobljenih pripadnika HVO-a, kao prilog istraživanju zločina srpskih i muslimanskih snaga nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1991. do 1995. godine)* [*The Croatian War of Independence and Crimes against Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1991-1995 (An overview of political and military events in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with special emphasis on the Muslim-Croat conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a list of murdered Croat civilians in Bosnia and Herzegovina and captured members of the HVO as a contribution to researching the crimes committed by Serb and Muslim forces against Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991 to 1995)*], 2nd edition (Zagreb; Mostar: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata; Udruga Hrvatska zvona, August 2020), 25-55 (herein-after: Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini*).

² The name Bosniaks is the official name for one of the three constitutive peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, in this work the name Bosniak-Muslims is used for the period after March 1994 (on March 30, 1994, the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was passed and the name Bosniaks is used in the Constitution) and when nationalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are discussed in general terms, or just the term Muslims if the period before March 1994 is under discussion. By the same token, the terms Bosniak-Muslim, or Muslim policies in BiH are used. In light of the political context of the term in Bosnia and Herzegovina since WWII, the appendix Muslim in the name draws attention to the religious orientation (significant majority) of persons who consider themselves Bosniaks. In the documents from the 1st Conference of the ZAVNOBiH in 1943, the “representative body led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the term Muslims is written with a capital ‘M’”. The consensus opinion is that the term “primarily denotes the religious community until 1968, that is 1971, when the Muslims were given the status of a people, when the term muslim – lower case – officially began to be used in documents with a capital ‘M’. At that same time the Muslims were defined as one of the three peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. The renaming of Muslims into Bosniaks was carried through at the Bosniak Assembly held on September 27, 1993, in Sarajevo, and was sanctioned by the passing of the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on March 30, 1994. Given the fact that “with the name Bosniak the predominant people strove to identify themselves with the common name of the country, which was a continuation of the ongoing twin trends of proclaiming Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Muslim country and easing out the term Herzegovina”, it is clear that the motive for introducing the

It is, therefore, understandable that a continued existence of Croats in the area that was referred to from the 16th to 18th centuries as Turkish Croatia, or, in 1939, as *Banovina Hrvatska*, which contained parts of the modern state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is of strategic importance for Croatia (not only on account of ethnic, but also on account of security reasons). In this fact lies the reason why Croatia supported the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina in their efforts to organize a viable defense of their domain against the covetous moves by the proponents of the ideas of Greater Serbia. It is important to stress that the Republic of Croatia made it a point to convince the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina to seek a solution to the issue of their rights within the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as long as Bosnia and Herzegovina remained an independent state.

Moreover, the parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina that were in *Banovina Hrvatska* in 1939 are almost identical to the area that the international community, in its bid to solve the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal territorial organization, envisaged, through the Vance-Owen plan from January 1993, as the "Croatian" provinces. This goes to show that the international community, honoring the ethnic map, considered the existence of "Croatian" provinces in the predominately Croatian areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and which had formed part of *Banovina Hrvatska*, as a viable solution regarding an internal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina and not as "the original sin of the Croatian policies".³

But every initiative for finding a viable political solution for a political and territorial restructuring of Bosnia and Herzegovina by various international factors was, ultimately, a dead-end. This was mainly due to the intransigent attitude of the Serbs and Muslim leaders. It is important to emphasize that Croatia recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 7, 1992, (while Serbia did not during the entire war) and that Croatia did not reject a single recom-

term Bosniak was political in nature with the aim of claiming Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country of Bosniaks. The implication is that the Serbs and Croats in Bosnia are foreign-neighboring elements and not peoples that constitute Bosnia and Herzegovina irrespective of the existence of Serbia and Croatia. See: Davor Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994. godine* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2018), 20-21, 63-64.

³ Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918-2008*. (Zagreb: EPH; Novi Liber, 2008), 727. In addition to this, in the interview he gave to the *Novosti* website, the contents of which were published on the *Teleskop* website on August 14, 2021, Goldstein, in the context of publishing his book *Hrvatska 1990. – 2020. Godine velikih nada i gorkih razočaranja [Croatia 1990 – 2020: Years of Great Hope and Bitter Disappointment]* stated, among other things, "Tuđman was obsessed with the idea of dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the idea is the original sin of Croatian policies that we carry the burden of to this day." See: "Teške optužbe Ive Goldsteina: Tuđman je vodio prijvetovnu politiku." ["Serious accusations made by Ivo Goldstein: Tuđman conducted a two-faced policy"].

mendation for a political and territorial restructuring of Bosnia and Herzegovina put forward by the international community. Simultaneously, and in accordance with the fact that there are three constitutive peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or, in other words, that Bosnia and Herzegovina is “Croatian, Muslim and Serbian”,⁴ the official Croatian policies proposed a solution according to which Bosnia and Herzegovina would be restructured into a confederation, that is, into three territorial units (“entities”),⁵ which was in line with the proposals of the international community until the second half of 1994 and the proposals of the Contact Group about two entities, or two territorial units, which was ultimately accepted by the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina negotiated in Dayton in November 1995 and signed in Paris in December 1995.⁶

⁴ ZAVNOBIH’s decision, made at its first conference in Mrkonjić Grad on November 25, 1943, is well known and often quoted. It states that BiH “is neither Serbian, nor Croatian, nor Muslim, but Serbian, and Muslim, and Croatian”. Also, in Article 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina of 1974 the three BiH peoples are specifically referred to – Muslims, Serbs and Croats. In July 1990 the socialist leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed an amendment to the Constitution by which Bosnia and Herzegovina was defined as “a democratic sovereign state of equal citizens, the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Muslims, Serbs and Croats and members of other peoples and ethnicities which live in that country”. Amendment LX to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was passed at the conference of the Assembly on July 31, 1990. See: The Official Gazette of the SR BiH (Sarajevo), 32 (1991).

⁵ For example, in the letter to the prime minister of the Federal Republic of Germany Helmut Kohl of July 13 1992, having explained that the “Serbs initially wanted to conquer and annex the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the remainder of Yugoslavia, or in other words to Greater Serbia” and that “faced with those Serb policies the Muslim leadership strives to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a Muslim state in Europe, with the help of the Muslim world”, President Tuđman pointed out, “Confronted with such Serb and Muslim policies, the representatives of the Croatian areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina – those areas that according to the Croat-Serb agreement (Cvetković-Maček) were in *Banovina Hrvatska* – wanted to reach a decision on joining these ethnically clean Croatian (Catholic) areas to Croatia. I personally acted to dissuade them from reaching that decision, and to induce them to accept that Bosnia and Herzegovina should be set up as a union of three constitutive peoples. That blueprint for solving the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been accepted by the representatives of the European Conference on Yugoslavia Ambassador Cutileiro in Lisbon, as the only reasonable approach.” See: Miroslav Tuđman, *Bosna i Hercegovina u raljama zapadne demokracije* [Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Jaws of Western Democracy] (Zagreb: Despot infinitus, 2013), 133. Also, in his letter to the President of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović of October 30, 1992, President Tuđman emphasized, “Croatia has recognized the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia has already designated its ambassador to that country and is actively endeavoring to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina as a unified state that will be a constitutive union of three equal and sovereign peoples.” See: *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶ The content of the Dayton Agreement, by which BiH was divided into two entities, that is, two territorial units. See: *Ibid.*, 573-575.

The Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosnia (*Hrvatska zajednica Herceg-Bosna* - HZHB) was formed on November 18, 1991, and its administrative military organization the Croatian Security Council (*Hrvatsko vijeće obrane* - HVO) was formed on April 8, 1992. The HZHB and the HVO were created as an immediate reaction to the events in the Republic of Croatia (Serb occupation of Vukovar and Serb massacres against Croats in Vukovar and Škabrnja), and to the decisions made by the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (forming of Serb autonomous areas in September 1991, proclamation of the Serbian Republic in Bosnia and Herzegovina on January 9, 1992, and other decisions). This was a period of acute uncertainty, exacerbated by the inability Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to protect the Croats from the looming Serb aggression. The forming of the HZHB was allowed by the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, the HZHB was a legal form of organizing municipalities for the purpose of joint action. It was a temporary expedient, and it is important to stress that the HZHB considered Bosnia and Herzegovina as its country, and considered itself subordinate to Bosnia and Herzegovina's state authorities as long as Bosnia and Herzegovina existed as a state. There are no legitimate documents of constitutional and legal validity which could suggest that the HZHB was, or aspired to become, a sovereign state, separated from Bosnia and Herzegovina and joined to Croatia. Also, the Republic of Croatia never passed a legal-political act that aimed at dividing or annexing parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, it can only be concluded that "the accusation that the Republic of Croatia, through the agency of its leadership affiliated with the leadership of the Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina, engaged in a joint criminal enterprise for the purpose of dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina, separating the predominately Croat part of its territory and joining that part of the country's territory to Croatia in a bid to create a greater Croatian state is completely unfounded". Mato Arlović, a judge of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia reached the same conclusion in his detailed legal analysis of the legality of the formation of the HZHB. He stated: "In reality, a complete opposite policy existed, a policy of cooperation and extending help to Bosnia and Herzegovina so that Bosnia and Herzegovina can defend itself and be internationally recognized as an independent country with its borders matching those of the former Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *In conclusio* it could be said that not only did the Republic of Croatia not take part in dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it also helped Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its influence on the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, helping to defend and arm Bosnia and Herzegovina, equipping its soldiers and providing humanitarian aid to its civilians and soldiers to achieve independence and international recognition. Furthermore, by cooperating with the international community, especially with the USA, Croatia contributed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's creation, to its achievement

of independence and to its survival to this day as an independent, sovereign, and internationally recognized state, in spite of all the difficulties and problems Croatia has been exposed to and burdened with.”⁷

The Croatian Republic Herzeg-Bosnia (*Hrvatska Republika Herceg-Bosna*) was also proclaimed (on August 28, 1993) in line with the existing accommodations and in accordance with the peace agreements and plans of the international community on internal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into three entities (Cutileiro’s plan for canonization of Bosnia and Herzegovina or the Lisbon Agreement, March 18, 1992; Vance-Owen plan on internal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into nine provinces and Sarajevo area, the beginning of January, 1993) and especially in accordance with (August 20, 1993) the newly drafted Owen-Stoltenberg peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina on a union of three republics. This plan came to the fore after the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) attacked the HVO.⁸

Croatia got involved in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian crisis because the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been attacked and because the future of the Croatian state depended on establishing a stable system of government in the area in question. Croatia supported, diplomatically and militarily, the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, Croatia offered an alliance to the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and allowed shipments of arms and equipment for Bosnia and Herzegovina to pass through Croatia. Also, Croatia allowed the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina to set up logistics bases in Croatia, and throughout the war, even during the conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO, in Croatian hospitals (Split, Zagreb, Slavonski Brod, Karlovac, Vinkovci, Metković and elsewhere) more than 10,000 wounded ARBiH soldiers and civilians – Bosniak-Muslims from BiH (the number does not include patients from Bosnia and Herzegovina suffering from various diseases and ailments) were treated and received medical care.

⁷ The claim that the legality of the HZHB was based on the Constitution of the SRBiH, Mato Arlović bases on the content of Articles 182, 213, 252, 263, 274, 275 of the Constitution of the SRBiH (Constitution of SRBiH, Official Gazette of the SRBiH, 4/74). Therefore, in the Decision on Forming the Croatian Defense Council of April 8, 1992, it is stated that the HVO is the highest defense organ of the Croatian people in HZHB established “with the aim of taking care of the sovereign area of the Croatian Community Herceg-Bosnia and of protecting the Croatian people and other peoples in the Community that find themselves under attack by the aggressor. (Odluka o osnivanju Hrvatskog vijeća obrane, Narodni list HZHB, 2/92 /Decision on forming the HVO.) See: Mato Arlović, *Hrvatska zajednica Herceg-Bosna i (pre)ustroj Bosne i Hercegovine* (Zagreb: Novi informator, 2017), 207-217.

⁸ Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 291. Vance-Owen plan envisaged three predominately Croat territorial units in BiH that would encompass 73.6 % of all Croats in BiH. See: Vladimir Šeks, *Državni udar – kako su Manolić i Mesić rušili Tuđmana i hrvatska politika prema BiH, 1. dio* (Zagreb: Večernji list, 2017), 41.

Prof. Mihovil Biočić, MD, was the director of KBC Split (Split Hospital) during the war. He has stated that, when the war had spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in extremely difficult circumstances for Croatia, when a large portion of the country was occupied and during a time of acute need in Croatia, the KBC Split, “in line with the dictates of conscience and in accordance with the Croatian policies in the 1990s”, provided medical help humanitarian aid to neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina. The KBC Split is a state-run hospital and that was the official Croatian policy at the time.⁹

Also, the Croatian government, when the YPA launched its aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina took all the necessary steps to enable the state institutions to accept and care for a large number of Muslim refugees. From an organizational standpoint, the endeavor was complex and huge. From a financial perspective, it was burdensome for the Croatian economy, already crippled by the Serb aggression and the resultant loss of a significant portion of the country’s territory. One report by the Croatian government from 1998 states that in 1992 Croatia took in more refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia than any other host country: in December 1992 there were 260,075 displaced persons from Croatia, and 402,768 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, including more than 200,000 Muslims (in total, 663,493 refugees and displaced persons).¹⁰

The costs of taking care of so many refugees were huge. The refugee crisis hit Croatia hard. For example, on March 18, 1994, on the day of the signing of the Washington Agreement on the cessation of the conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Catholic Information Agency stated, “According to the information issued by the Office of the Republic of Croatia for Refugees and Displaced Persons, 900,000 displaced persons and refugees moved through Croatia and currently there are about 570,000 refugees and displaced persons in the country” and “from the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatia took in more than 600,000 refugees from Bosnia. 425,000 of them were Muslims, 170,000 Croats and 5,000 were members of other nationalities”. In relation to the financial cost, the Catholic Information Agency stated, “During 1993, 344.5 million German marks were spent on housing the refugees. Croatia covered 70% or 240 million German marks of that price tag, UNHCR 14% or about 48 million German marks, the European Community 13% or 45 million German marks

⁹ Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 298.

¹⁰ The Government of the Republic of Croatia’s report on the process of taking care of and return of expelled persons, displaced persons and refugees so far, *Narodne novine* (Zagreb), 92 (1990).

while other humanitarian sources (Caritas, Red Cross, Merhamet) spent 11 million German marks, or 3%¹¹.

It is a fact that Croatian forces participated in defending and liberating Bosnia and Herzegovina from Serb forces and that the role of the Croatian forces, and equally that of the Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina, was crucial for the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²

During 1992 Croatian forces prevented the Serbs from capturing strategically pivotal areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar and the Neretva Valley, part of Bosnian Posavina, areas of Livno, Tomislavgrad and Rama) and occupying an even larger portion of the country.¹³ After that, launching a string of actions and operations (Cincar at the beginning of November 1994, Winter '94, and Jump 1 in April and Jump 2 in June, Summer '95 in July, Maestral in September and Southern Move in October 1995) the Croatian forces liberated more than 5,000 square kilometers of territory in western and south-western Bosnia. These areas had been occupied by Serb forces in 1992.¹⁴

The Croatian Army, by launching Operation Storm, enabled the lifting of the siege of Bihać.¹⁵ The city had been encircled by Serbian forces for 1,201 days. The Croatian Army thus saved the lives of thousands of Bosniaks-Muslims in the Bihać area. On July 21, 1995, the Head of the Municipality of Bihać Adnan Alagić stated, in a letter to Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, that for the Bosniak-Muslim residents in the Bihać area "the only hope lay with our brave fighters (5th Corps of the ARBiH, author's comment) and with the friendly Croatian people, because the fate assigned to both of our peoples by the aggressor was the same".¹⁶

¹¹ Report on the number of refugees and displaced persons in Croatia). Informativna katolička agencija. Accessed February 26, 2023. <https://ika.hkm.hr/novosti/izvjestaj-o-broju-izbjeglica-i-prognanika-u-hrvatskoj>.

¹² The referendum on independence of BiH was held on February 29 and March 1, 1992. 64.31% of the registered voters voted in the referendum. 99.44% of the voters voted for independence. The referendum was a success thanks only to the votes of the Croats that supported BiH's independence. The Serbs, for the most part, boycotted the referendum. Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini, 1991. - 1995.*, 55-56.

¹³ Ibid., 140-147, 163-167.

¹⁴ Ibid., 220, 225, 229-237, 239.

¹⁵ The defense of Bihać held thanks to Croatia's help. Croatia forces saved Bihać from Serb occupation a number of times, by launching Operation Winter 94, Operation Summer 95 and especially Operation Storm, a military/police action, when the siege of Bihać was finally broken. See: Ibid., 217-219, 227-234.

¹⁶ Ibid., 227.

The units of the Croatian Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina were, for the most part, deployed against the Serb forces, partially on account of an agreement between the Croatian and Bosniak-Muslim leadership reached for the purpose of preventing Serb attacks on Croatia and protecting the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina from Serb aggression. The contents of the Declaration on Implementation the Washington Agreement, which was signed on July 22, 1995, in Split by President Tuđman and President Izetbegović (Split Agreement),¹⁷ show that the Croatian forces, from the end of July 1995, were engaged against Serb forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of an agreement with the Bosniak-Muslim leadership and that the call of “the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Republic of Croatia for immediate military aid and other help in defending against Serb aggression in the area of Bihać” was heeded by the Republic of Croatia.¹⁸

It was the Croat-Muslim alliance that enabled the breaking of the Serb siege of the Muslim enclave in Bihać, saving thousands of Bosniak-Muslim lives and facilitated the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the advance of Croatian forces towards Bosansko Grahovo and Glam-oč during Operation Summer 95, launched on July 25, 1995, meant that the Serbs forces that had just conquered Žepa and kept in an encirclement the remaining Bosniak-Muslim-ARBiH soldiers and men – who had fled from the town to surrounding mountains and forests – could not receive significant help. That development, arguably, made it a lot easier for the Bosniak-Muslims from Žepa, who were in danger of the same fate as had befallen the men from Srebrenica, murdered after the Serb forces had occupied that city in eastern Bosnia on July 11, 1995, to escape from the area into government-controlled territory.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 228.

¹⁸ The content of “Deklaracija o oživotvorenju Sporazuma iz Washingtona, zajedničkoj obrani RBiH i RH od srpske agresije i postizanju političkog rješenja sukladno naporima međunarodne zajednice” [“Declaration on realizing the Agreement from Washington, joint defense of RBiH and Republic of Croatia from Serb aggression and reaching a political solution in accordance with the efforts of the international community”] See: Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 334-335.

¹⁹ “Fall of Žepa and the flight to Serbia”, 90-93, paragraphs 415-431. Without analyzing the veracity of his claims about shifting the bulk of the forces, the notes of the American UN worker Edward P. Joseph, who was in Žepa on July 25, 1995, and together with his colleagues from the peace mission was in contact with Lieutenant General Ratko Mladić, the commander of the Main HQ of the Army of Serbian Republic in BiH, suggest that Operation Summer 95 helped Bosniak-Muslims escape from Žepa after its fall: “With the fate of the men of Zepa still in the balance, I asked Mladic if he would actually allow the UN to evacuate the Bosniak men across Serb lines to safety. His chilling answer, I later learned, was the same he had given

Despite all the mentioned facts, it was attempted, through numerous disinformation ploys, to hold Croatia responsible for attempting to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina and even to accuse Croatia of launching aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. One disinformation, among many used, was that Franjo Tuđman met, in March 1991, with the Serbian president, Slobodan Milošević, in Karađorđevo to reach a deal about dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina.

President Tuđman and President Milošević met alone two times – first time on March 25, 1991, in Karađorđevo and second time on April 15, 1991, in Tikveš. The six presidents of the Yugoslav republics met six times. One meeting was held between three of them – Croatian President Tuđman, Serbian President Milošević and President of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović – on July 12, 1991, in Split. There are many theories about these meetings in published works, but, when examining the communiqués of the mentioned presidents from the meetings it becomes clear that a division of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not a subject of discussion at any of them. The presidents did discuss possible internal systems of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁰ Also, events after March 1991, especially the Serb aggression against the Republic of Croatia in the second half of 1991, give the lie to the thesis that the war was an “agreed upon” affair for the purpose of dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia. In the context of the Serb aggression against Croatia in the second half of 1991 it is worth pointing

in Srebrenica: ‘Yes, they can go – except for the war criminals.’ But Mladic’s designs were thwarted when he was quickly forced to redeploy his main forces to the Western front where the Croats were making a decisive advance. The Zepa men, spared a direct assault, were tipped off by escapees from Srebrenica and eventually crossed over into Serbia or managed to get across Serb lines to Bosniak areas of control.” See: “Kako je pad Žepe pokazao surovost snaga bosanskih Srba,” [“The Fall of Zepa Showed Bosnian Serb Forces’ Cruelty”] Balkaninsight website. Accessed February 26, 2023. <https://balkaninsight.com/sr/2020/07/25/kako-je-pad-zepe-pokazao-surovost-snaga-bosanskih-srba/>.

²⁰ About the meetings in Karađorđevo, Tikveš and Split, and about reactions to these meetings in published works, as well as about why the thesis that a division of Bosnia and Herzegovina was agreed at those meetings. See: Ivica Lučić, *Uzroci rata: Bosna i Hercegovina od 1980. do 1992.* (Zagreb: Despot infinitus; Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2013), 389-403, 469-471. It has to be noted that after the mentioned meeting in Split Alija Izetbegović stated, “We did not discuss a division of BiH, and we never could” (Lučić, *Uzroci rata*, 402). President Tuđman confirmed that the subject of discussion in Split was not a division of BiH, but the country’s internal system of governance: “Even before this horrible war started... I, wanting to prevent this evil, openly talked with Milošević and Izetbegović, privately and with both together in Split and I told them that there was no other solution for the survival of BiH but a confederal option, acceptable to the three peoples that have to be constitutive. They weren’t interested.” (Miroslav Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini: dokumenti 1991.-1995.* [*The Truth about Bosnia and Herzegovina: Documents 1991-1995*] (Zagreb: Slovo M., 2005).

out that the Serb forces destroyed the village of Ravno and other villages and settlements in the area, murdering, expelling and brutalizing Croats there, and that, starting in March 1992, the Croats and Serbs fought each other in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, without Croatia and Croats it is questionable whether the modern state of Bosnia and Herzegovina would have come into existence. The referendum on independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina (February 29 and March 1, 1992) would have failed without the Croat votes, and Bosnia and Herzegovina would probably not have been able to defend itself against Serb aggression, and the ARBiH would probably not have been able to liberate the occupied parts of the country had the Croats been allied with the Serb forces.

Croatian policies toward BiH in President Tuđman's speeches

President Tuđman often spoke in public about the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina's status and the country's borders. For example, in his speech in the Croatian Parliament when the Parliament was constituted on May 30, 1990, President Tuđman talked, among other things, about establishing a new constitutional position of Croatia in Yugoslavia and he emphasized, "State sovereignty in a union with other peoples of today's Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia can be secured only on a confederative basis, as a contractual union of sovereign states."²¹

There is no denying that the mentioned "union of sovereign states" Tuđman envisaged in "inter-republic borders" inherited from the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, or, in other words, that he accepted the internal borders in the former SFRY as state borders. He knew that any attempt at altering the borders would lead to war, and he was determined to avoid war. This is exemplified by his speech on the occasion of the proclamation of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia on December 22, 1990, in Zagreb. Among other things, he said, "Today is not the time to alter borders in Europe, because the international factors do not accept it," and pointed out: "Within the framework of the democratic order of the European Community, borders should not be a source of quarrel, threats, conflicts and wars, but fulcrums of cooperation, connectedness, trade and development. By accepting the existing delineations, we are certain that our geopolitical position, interests and propinquity lead us to all forms of transportation, economic and

²¹ "Znameniti govori iz povijesti saborovanja – Govor Franje Tuđmana u Saboru 30. svibnja 1990." ["Notable speeches in the Sabor – Franjo Tuđman's speech in Sabor on May 30, 1995", [http: www.sabor.hr](http://www.sabor.hr), accessed on March 10, 2015.

other ties with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and also other countries of today's Yugoslav and especially European communities."²²

The principle of inviolability of borders, which he perceived as a fulcrum of cooperation and connectedness, as opposed to strife, was in line with the demands of the international community. President Tuđman, aware of the necessity of internationalizing the Croatian question, shaped, as much as he could, his policies according to the leanings of the international community. That said, it is important to point out that President Tuđman never wavered from pursuing vital Croatian interests.

His attitude towards the issue of the borders of all the republics of the SFRY, and especially towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, President Tuđman expressed unambiguously in his speech in the Croatian Parliament on July 25, 1991, when the members of parliament passed the Constitutional Decision on Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Croatia. Among other things, he said: "By declaring independence, the current borders of the Republic of Croatia become state borders in relation to the other republics and neighboring states of the SFRY. To that point, allow me, honorable members of parliament, to touch upon some discussions doing the rounds in the public arena, and upon certain disinformation. The leadership of the Republic of Croatia has emphasized that it supports the principle of honoring all the borders of today's SFRY republics, and especially in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the leadership of the Republic of Croatia has also emphasized that those who subscribe to the idea of altering the current Yugoslav borders for the purpose of creating a Greater Serbian state, that is, to the plans that all Serbs should live in one state, or to certain other plans that bring into question the existing borders, inevitably, by doing so, raise the issue of that part of the Croatian people who live outside of the Republic of Croatia, mostly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro ..."²³

At the end of 1991 President Tuđman gave an interview to *Slobodna Dalmacija* (December 31, 1991/ January 1, 1992, issue, p. 3), in which, among other things, to the HINA's journalist question, "Can it be concluded that Serbia does not covet the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it does want to bring

²² Speech on the occasion of the proclaiming the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, December 22, 1990. Accessed February 26, 2023. <https://www.tudjman.hr/govori/proglasenje-ustava-republike-hrvatske>.

²³ From the transcript: "Nastavak 6. dana 17. skupne sjednice svih vijeća Sabora Republike Hrvatske, održane 25. lipnja 1991. u Velikoj vijećnici Sabora RH" [Continuation of day 6 of the 17th joint conference of all councils of the Sabor of the Republic of Croatia, held on June 25, 1991, in the Great Hall of the Sabor of the Republic of Croatia] – the final and ceremonial part held after a break, from 1850 hours, INFODOK service, Croatian Sabor.

the Muslims over to its side?" he said: "It is unreasonable to expect that such a solution will be supported by the entire Muslim population. If Milošević's orientation is genuine, then that would enable the reality of the Croatian community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and bring it closer to us. It would be interesting to see how the YA would act in that scenario (Yugoslav People's Army, author's comment). The YA is clearly just a means for implementing Serb plans. Agreeing to delineation would mean that war in BiH was maybe not inevitable and, at the culmination of the crisis would be realized that which we did not manage to bring about during last year's negotiations.²⁴ Maybe it is possible to reach an agreement like in 1939 (Cvetković-Maček agreement on restructuring contemporary Yugoslavia and establishing *Banovina Hrvatska*, author's comment), but a better one. All options are on the table, with the added factor of interesting games of European and world powers played in the region. On the other hand, the insistence of Europe and America on the principle that borders cannot be altered by force means that borders could be altered through negotiations. Insisting on BiH's sovereignty could be important in the context of not allowing Milošević to realize his plans and to chase him away from the political arena. In light of that, Marković's resignation did not happen by accident, just when the statement from the State Department was issued. Before that a change in leadership in Croatia and Serbia had been demanded, so as to preserve Yugoslavia. If the world factors insist on preserving the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that will constitute a certain pressure brought to bear on Serbia."

The reporter then asked, "What effect will the creation of Serb provinces in BiH have on Croatia, irrespective of whether the provinces will be independent or joined to Serbia?" President Tuđman replied, "It is a fact that today, two million Serbs live west of the Drina. It is far more perilous to retain the status quo of hatred and intolerance that erupt through assassinations, war, propagation of the Chetnik ideals, propagation of the Ustasha ideals, then to strive to remove the roots of that endless internecine conflict. That could be achieved by realizing Serbia's national aims so that Serbia has no more reason to expand, and, at the same time, Croatian lands would be joined to Croatia, because the shape of the Croatian borders, right now, is unnatural. How can you set up a Croatian border post near Imotski or a customs post near Dubrovnik in relation to the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Leaving them outside of Croatia? It is in the interests of Croatia to solve this problem in a natural way, to find a solution akin to that of *Banovina*. One portion of the

²⁴ It is not clear what negotiations President Tuđman referred to. Probably the meeting of the six presidents of the republics or the meeting of the three presidents in Split on June 12, 1991, at which a division of BiH was not a topic of discussion, but the issue of internal system of governance of BiH was. (See footnote 21.)

‘land of Bosnia’ could remain, where Muslims would be a majority, and that state of Bosnia could be a buffer area between Serbia and Croatia. That would mean the end of the colonial construct that is Bosnia and Herzegovina. The problem is not insoluble if we ground the solution in the imperative of creating conditions for peaceful coexistence between Serbia and Croatia, taking into account the interests of the Muslims in the region. That would satisfy international interests too. (...) Mr. Alija Izetbegović allowed these conversations, and suggestions about dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina originated in that republic with Serbs, Muslims and Croats. (...)”²⁵

What President Tuđman said in this interview has been used by the media and certain historians as proof of his intention to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Serbian President Milošević.²⁶ But, the accusers omit the fact that Tuđman, in the interview, spoke about scenarios for averting war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at a time of complex circumstances, when parts of Croatia were occupied, when the proponents of the Greater Serbian idea seemed all powerful in Bosnia and Herzegovina and when a Serb aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina was clearly imminent. The accusers also gloss over the fact that the US intelligence services evaluated, in the middle of December, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the same terms as President Tuđman did in that interview and reached the same conclusion about possible peaceful outcomes of the crisis as President Tuđman did. The interview took place shortly after the US intelligence services produced their report. The report states: “Although there is still a glimmer of hope that the conflict in Yugoslavia can be worked out along the lines proposed by the EC, the prospects of Bosnia-Hercegovina emerging with its current borders intact seems increasingly remote. The most positive outcome we foresee is one in which the moderates manage to guide the republic through a ‘negotiated division’ with Serbian areas uniting with Serbia, Croatian enclaves joining Croatia, and the Muslims joining either Croatia or carving out an Islamic state from what remains.”²⁷

²⁵ *Slobodna Dalmacija*, December 31, 1991/ January 1, 1992, 3.

²⁶ Speaking of “agreed division” or “delineation in BiH”, it has to be pointed out that Alija Izetbegović himself proposed such a solution. For example, on two occasions in January 1994 he offered to President Tuđman “everything south and west of Prozor as far as Neretva Valley, and a division of Mostar to the left and right bank, if the Croats give up on central Bosnia and relinquish it to the Bosniaks”. Tuđman turned down the offer (Mate Granić, *Diplomatska oluja [Diplomatic Storm]* (Zagreb: Večernji list, 2019), 53. Jacques Paul Klein, from 1995 to 1997 UNTAES Transitional Administrator for the Croatian Danube Region, has confirmed that Izetbegović did indeed make the offer of western Herzegovina to President Tuđman (Jadranka Jureško-Kero/Večernji list/<https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/jacques-paul-klein-bivsi-prijelazni-upravitelj-untaes-a-izetbegovic-tudjmanu-davao-hercegovinu-828818>).

²⁷ Directorate of Intelligence, Bosnia-Hercegovina: *On the Edge of the Abyss*, 19 December 1991; Tuđman, *Bosna i Hercegovina u raljama zapadne demokracije*, 58; it has to be noted that

President Tuđman did not confine his belief that Bosnia and Herzegovina's borders should be respected to the public arena and speeches covered by the media. This is confirmed by what was said at the 9th Session of the Defense Council and National Security, held in Zagreb on May 11, 1993, immediately after the conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO had begun in Mostar. The second item of the agenda at the session was devoted to "the problems relating to Croatian-Muslim conflicts in Bosnia". President Tuđman stated, among other things, "I am for preserving Bosnia and Herzegovina, but not as a unitary state, but as a union of three constitutive people on a confederate basis." At the same session he concluded the following: "The developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina come as a direct result of insufficient understanding of the strategic need for cooperation between the Croats and Muslims on the Croatian side, and on the Muslim side. There is insufficient trust, we can even say mistrust. On the Muslim side, that mistrust is manifested in the belief that this Community of Herzeg-Bosnia wants to separate, while on the Croat side the mistrust is manifested by the belief that the Muslims want to impose their authority on all the areas, from diplomacy to their ostensible agenda of altering the demographic picture, the demographic composition of these

in such analyses on BiH in which President Tuđman is mentioned, the following is stated, "Intelligence and press reports indicates that both Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and Croatian President Franjo Tuđman are eyeing annexation of parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina to their respective territories. Moreover, reports indicate the two sides remained in sporadic contact on this subject despite their conflict. Last summer (...) Tuđman told visiting German politicians that Bosnia-Herzegovina was absurdly large and that, in principle, he favored dividing it. Tuđman subsequently disavowed these views when challenged by US officials and (...) there is no support in the Croatian cabinet for annexing parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina." (<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/1991-12-19.pdf>). The concluding part of this National Intelligence Estimate also contains a pessimistic projection (consisting of four scenarios) regarding the viability of consensually divided BiH. According to the NIE, such a polity would be unstable due to the ethnic distribution of the country and the Muslim enclave/state riven by internal political strife. Also, Serb pretension would exacerbate the situation. During this period the Americans were of the opinion that Milošević coveted parts of BiH to create a greater Serbian state. They also presumed that Tuđman, in a calculated move, wanted to cushion the blow of giving up on certain occupied areas of Croatia by acquiring territory in BiH. The CIA, in its reports, differentiated between Serb and Croatian moves. In a NIE from October 1, 1993, irrespective of Tuđman's possible musings, it is stated: "However, Presidents Tuđman and Milošević will try to bring their compatriots to heel and avoid flouting the fiction of a unified Bosnia that the international community supports. Zagreb already exerts strong control over the Bosnian Croat leadership and need not to be in a hurry to enforce formal annexation." (<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/1993-10-01.pdf>). When everything is taken into account, and in light of the fact that President Tuđman supported all the recommendations made by the international community about BiH's internal system of governance, it has to be concluded that the official policies of the republic of Croatia, for a myriad of reasons, was for preserving Bosnia and Herzegovina.

areas, these provinces that are envisaged by Vance's plan (Vance-Owen plan of January 1993, author's comment) as Croatian provinces. So, we have misunderstandings on both the Muslim and Croat sides. On the other hand, there are extremists on both sides. That said, it is probably true that there are more extremists on the Muslim side, among the Mujahideen, because those people want to escalate the conflict as much as possible."²⁸

At the same session President Tuđman agreed with the theory that "unity of the Muslims and Croats is of strategic importance, not only for the survival of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also for the survival of Croatia", but, in light of the escalation of the conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO, President Tuđman asked the present, including Stjepan Mesić and Josip Manolić, whether cooperation was possible, especially in the military sphere, with those who reject cooperation and were bent on attacking Croats.²⁹

President Tuđman, when the conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO in Mostar was escalating, explained, on May 14, 1993, in Zagreb, the Croatian policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina to the German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel:

"From the very beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, we viewed, naturally, for geopolitical reasons, developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina with interest. For that reason, we acted to prevent the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina falling into Serb hands, because, had that happened, the south of Croatia, from Split to Dubrovnik, would have been in acute jeopardy from military attack. We did everything we could to keep the relations between the Muslims and Croats cordial. We induced the Croats to vote for a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina. But now, as far as the Bosnian Muslims go, we see that there was no clear idea what needed to be done to defend Bosnia and Herzegovina and what needed to be done to protect the Croats and keep them content. When the Serbs attacked Croatia, Alija Izetbegović stated that the war in Croatia did not concern him, that it was not his war. There were no defensive plans for the contingency of a Serb aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. When that aggression did come about, only the Croats were ready to resist the aggressor. It was obvious that the Muslim leadership was in favor of preserving Yugoslavia, because, in that eventuality, all the Muslims would be in one state. That policy was not in the interest of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also it was not in the Republic of Croatia's interest.

²⁸ Šeks, *Državni udar*, 47-51.

²⁹ 9. sjednica Vijeća za obranu i nacionalnu sigurnost, 11. svibnja 1993. [9th Session of the Council for Defense and National Security, May 11, 1993], 24-27; HR-HMDCDR, *baza HDD*, inv. br. 338.

Regarding the issue of creating positive relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we supported the Croats in their efforts to foil the Serbs' genocidal attacks. That was fairly successful in Herzegovina, but unfortunately in Posavina we met with practically no success at all. The Croats, already feeling imperiled by the Serb aggressor, started being afraid of the Muslim aspirations for creating a Muslim state. This mistrust still exists today, and the extremists operate within that framework, because there is still no understanding, on both sides, of the necessity of realizing a strategy of securing mutual interests. In the current Muslim-Croat conflict, we see elements of misunderstanding in action, but also provocation, and all that right when Europe and the USA are focused on solving the problems created by the Serb aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. A large portion of the responsibility for the rift between the Muslims and Croats lies with the English elements in the UN, those that are committed to supporting pro-Serbian positions. When it comes to the behavior of the Muslim politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one must be aware of the fact that in their growing impotence in resisting the Serb aggressor they turned to the desire to wage a 'holy war' against Serbia, with the help of Iran, Pakistan... Iran even proclaimed that it was a war against Christians – regardless of the number of casualties and duration. This is not our policy. I dwelled on this subject, because there is insufficient understanding of this topic. Today, having accepted the Vance-Owen plan, and the Muslims being unable to chase the Serbs out from their territories, they turned on the Croatian provinces. (...) I wanted to help, so I decided to go to Mostar. Germany could, with their influence over the Muslims, help prevent the worst from happening.”³⁰

The information about help from Iran and the growing popularity of the idea of waging a holy war mentioned by President Tuđman is confirmed by a statement of the former general of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Saeed Ghasemi: “We went as Red Crescent members to provide military training to the Mujahideen forces (...). The truth is that in Bosnia – in the heart of Europe – things happened that our presence there made possible.” He confirmed that Al-Qaeda arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina and added, “there was a time when we were in Bosnia and Herzegovina together with Al-Qaeda members”, who “copied our style, from the headband and the flags” and “named their regiments such-and-such”. He concluded, “Something new happened there – the establishment of Muslim jihadi units. What happened in the last five or

³⁰ Ivan Ilić, “Početci hrvatske diplomacije u Bonnu” [“The beginnings of Croatian Diplomacy in Bonn”], in *Sjećanja i prilozi za povijest diplomacije Republike Hrvatske, prvo desetljeće, Recollections and contributions to a history of the Republic of Croatia's diplomacy. The first decade*, vol. 3, (Zagreb: Croatian Diplomatic Club - MATE d.o.o., 2011), 92-94.

six years in Syria happened before in Bosnia”, “where people loyal to Iran from Turkey, France, Germany and Tunisia came to fight, just like foreigners came to fight in Syria.”³¹

Croatian diplomacy sought a peaceful solution to the conflicts in the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the framework of the internationally recognized borders. In his speech at the 48th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations held in New York on September 28, 1993, President Tuđman regretfully concluded, “The aggression of Serbia and Montenegro against Croatia, and then Bosnia and Herzegovina should have been opposed more energetically.”

In relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina he emphasized that Croatia had been among the first to recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina and that Croatia “had done more for the refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina than the whole world combined and that it continued to do so despite the Muslim aggression against the areas belonging to the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. Also, he praised the good work done by Turkey in reconciling the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and noted that “the Croatian people had agreed to many compromises in Bosnia and Herzegovina but that a point had been reached where certain new compromises were no longer possible”.³²

Striving to find a peaceful solution to the war in the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the framework of the internationally recognized borders, President Tuđman – “deeply worried by the failure of all efforts to stop the war and armed conflicts in the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina” – on November 1, 1993, proposed a peace initiative

³¹ “On April 14, 2019, an interview with former IRGC General Saeed Ghasemi was uploaded to the Iranian media website *apparat.com*. (...) Ghasemi recounted his experience training Mujahideen in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the cover of being a Red Crescent member and said that the IRGC worked alongside Al-Qaeda during that time. He said that it was “marvelous” that people who were loyal to Iran came from Turkey, France, Germany, and Tunisia to fight in Bosnia, like the foreigners who had come to fight in Syria. – Saeed Ghasemi: *We Went [To Bosnia] As Red Crescent Members To Provide Military Training To The Mujahideen Forces*. (...) *The truth is that in Bosnia – in the heart of Europe – things happened that our presence and that in our footsteps. (...) Al-Qaeda came. (...) There was a time when we were in Bosnia and Herzegovina together with Al-Qaeda members. They copied our style, from the headband and the flags. (...) They named their regiments such-and-such. (...) Something new happened there – the establishment of Muslim jihadi units. What happened in the last five or six years in Syria happened before in Bosnia*. See: “Former IRGC General Saeed Ghasemi: We Trained Mujahideen In Bosnia; Rouhani, Zarif, Salehi Should Face Trial.”

³² *Kronologija rata (Agresija na Hrvatsku i Bosnu i Hercegovinu, s naglaskom na stradanje Hrvata u BiH), 1989.-1998.*, [*The Chronology of the War (Aggression against Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with an emphasis of the plight of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1989-1998)*], edited by Ante Beljo, (Zagreb: Hrvatski informativni centar, 1998), 308.

for stopping the war and the horrors of war in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. This initiative was, on November 5, sent to all the relevant men of power in the world: to Co-Chairmen of the International Conference of the Former Yugoslavia David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, to President of Austria Thomas Klestil, to President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel, to President of France François Mitterrand, to President of the Republic of Italy Oscar Luigi Scalfar, to President of the Republic of Hungary Árpád Göncz, to Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Helmut Kohl, to President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin, to President of the USA William Clinton, to President of the Republic of Turkey Süleyman Demirel and to Prime Minister of Great Britain John Major.³³

Alongside the part of the content relating to Croatia – “The recommendation for implementing the peace plan in the area under protection of the United Nations (UNPA) in Croatia”, the mentioned initiative contained two more chapters – “The recommendation for ending the war and establishing peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina” and “Recommendation for a permanent solidification of peace”. The content of these chapters clearly shows that President Tuđman, or, in other words, Croatian policies at the time, respected the sovereignty and borders of the former Yugoslav republics, including the sovereignty and borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among other things, President Tuđman proposed:

- that all states from the territory of the former Yugoslavia, within the framework of the peace conference and under the auspices of the UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council sign a solemn declaration on mutual recognition of independence and sovereignty of all newly created states, in their internationally recognized borders.
- that within a period of three months they sign an agreement on succession of rights and obligations of all successor states of the former Yugoslavia based on the Arbitration Commission’s decisions.
- that a solemn declaration be signed, within the framework of the conference, on respecting the rights of national minorities and ethnic communities, according to international standards and conventions, with establishing international supervision of the implementation of these agreements.³⁴

³³ *Korespondencija predsjednika Republike Hrvatske dr. Franje Tuđmana od 1990.do 1999. godine, knj. I.-VI.* [Correspondence of the President of the Republic of Croatia Franjo Tuđman from 1990 to 1999, Vol. I-VI], edited by Miroslav Tuđman, Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada and Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2015), vol. 3, 446-450.

³⁴ *Domovinski rat (Pregled političke i diplomatske povijesti) (The Croatian War of Independence (An overview of political and diplomatic history))*, edited by Ante Nazor and Tomislav Pušek (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus; HMDCDR, 2018), 214-215.

Despite all of the points mentioned above and because of the armed conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO, that is, the Croats and Muslims in a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina during 1993, the activities of Croatian diplomacy were hampered by a huge pressure on Croatia and President Tuđman stemming from the fact that the international community ascribed to Croatia the largest portion of responsibility for the conflict. That situation could have easily led to sanctions against the Republic of Croatia and the country was in real danger of being branded an aggressor against Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, in due course the causes and progression of that conflict became clearer, just like the fact that President Tuđman, by using his influence, played a major role in easing the tensions between the warring parties, while the Muslim side was bent on rejecting reasonable proposals brought forward by the Croatian side for establishing peace. The then Croatian ambassador to Germany, Ivan Ilić, is of the opinion that the change in position of the international community, especially in regard to Germany, was affected by the meeting between Tuđman and Izetbegović on January 10 and 11, 1994, “in the quiet of Petersberg Castle” near Bonn, organized by the German government.³⁵

According to Ambassador Ilić’s notes, President Tuđman considered, in the circumstances prevalent at the time, “the cessation of all hostilities and signing of an agreement on delineation between the Croatian Republic Herzeg-Bosnia and Bosniak Republic (in fact a Muslim entity, that is, territorial unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina, author’s comment) based on a ratio of 17.5% to 33.3% from the entire area of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the main precondition for solving the Muslim-Croat armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.³⁶ Even though Izetbegović was not prepared to accept Tuđman’s suggestions during the meeting, Ambassador Ilić evaluated the talks in Petersberg as “successful and very useful” and concluded that “the continuation of the talks in Geneva (in the second half of January 1994) and active participation of the USA in solving the Muslim-Croat conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina led to the signing of the Washington Agreement” (March 18, 1994) which ended the conflict. He pointed out that “the chain reaction of the mentioned activities for peace was initiated by Tuđman’s peace initiative (November 2, 1993)”.³⁷

³⁵ Ilić, “Početci hrvatske diplomacije u Bonnu,” 43.

³⁶ Ibid., 58-62.

³⁷ Ibid. Mate Granić, who, as the minister of foreign affairs, was with President Tuđman at the mentioned meeting in Bonn, claims that Alija Izetbegović, on that occasion, during the meeting in the residence of the Croatian ambassador in Bad Godesberg in Bonn on January 10 at 2300 hours offered to President Tuđman “everything south and west of Prozor as far as Neretva Valley, and a division of Mostar to the left and right bank, if the Croats give up on central Bosnia and relinquish it to the Bosniaks. Tuđman turned down the offer.” See: Granić, *Diplomatska oluja*, 53.

The role played by Croatia in defending and ensuring the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state President Tuđman explained immediately after the war, in “the Report of the Condition of the State of Croatia and Croatian Nation in 1995”, which he read out loud at the joint conference of both houses of Croatian parliament on January 15, 1996, pointing out that “with its contribution during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia protected the Croats there and provided help to the Bosniak-Muslim people to the fullest extent of its ability. Also, with its military victories in western Bosnia and through the Agreement of Federation it secured the strategic interests of the state of Croatia”.³⁸

For a better understanding of the Croatian policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time, we can use Gojko Šušak’s speech at the conference of the House of Representatives of the Sabor of the Croatian Republic Herzeg Bosnia on February 8, 1994, in Livno. Gojko Šušak was, during the war, the minister of defense of the Republic of Croatia. The fact that he was highly placed in the Croatian government at the time gives poignancy to his words. On February 8, 1994, he addressed the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina: “You have done nothing to help the Croatian people in Herzeg-Bosnia, you have done nothing to help the Croatian republic that is the parent country of all Croats, if a Muslim in Livno or a Serb in Mostar does not enjoy the same rights as a Croat, because this is a guarantee that a Croat in Sarajevo and a Croat in Banja Luka and a Croat in Zenica will have his rights. And if they commit a crime against us, then let’s prove that our religion, our civilized traditions do not allow us to respond in kind.”³⁹

Considering everything mentioned above, blaming exclusively the Croat side for the complex and complicated Croat-Muslim relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1990s and criticizing “Tuđman’s, that is, Croatian policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina” is unfounded, especially without examining possible alternative policies by taking into full account Izetbegović’s, that is, Muslim policies towards the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina at that time.⁴⁰

³⁸ President Tuđman’s Report of the Condition of the State of Croatia and Croatian Nation in 1995 at the joint conference of both houses of Croatian parliament on January 15, 1996) published in *Domovinski rat*, edited by Nazor and Pušek, 276.

³⁹ HMDCDR, Baza digitalnog arhivskog gradiva [Digital database of archival material], *mapa 18, inv. broj 153*, Livno, February 8, 1994.

⁴⁰ Certain Muslim politicians and military commanders, supported by Alija Izetbegović, wanted to solve the Croatian problem. This is confirmed by Doctor Safet Ćiba’s speech on Radio Konjic on April 12, 1993, prior to the ARBiH’s attack of Croats in the area. Safet Ćiba was appointed president of the wartime presidency of Konjic Municipality. In the mentioned speech, he stated, “There is only one people in BiH – Bosnians, that is, Bosnians of Islam-

Conclusion

In addition to defending against aggression and liberating its own occupied territories, Croatia contributed greatly to the defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina and liberation of parts of BiH territory under Serb control. After the Sarajevo Ceasefire (January 1992), which temporarily stopped or at least significantly lowered the intensity of the war in the Republic of Croatia, the Serb forces launched a war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of defining the borders of the so-called Greater Serbia. By the end of 1992, the Serbs had conquered almost 70% of BiH's territory. From April 1992, the Serb forces conducted a huge offensive operation on most of BiH's territory, thus completely escalating the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that had been smoldering from October 1991 and the attack of Serb forces on the Croats in the Ravno area in eastern Herzegovina.⁴¹

The Bosniaks-Muslims and Croats at first resisted jointly against the Serb forces, but, mutual mistrust and differing views regarding internal system of governance for Bosnia and Herzegovina and a huge influx of Muslim refugees from the areas conquered by the Serbs into the predominately Croat areas in central Bosnia and northern Herzegovina led, at the end of October 1992 and especially from April 1993, to conflict between the ARBiH and the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) in a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina's territory. The Bosniaks' policies favored a unitary Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the Croats geared their policies toward establishing special Croat, Bosniak and Serbian territorial units within Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the initial recommendations of the international community regarding internal system of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not counting the powerful clashes between the ARBiH and the HVO in October 1992 in Novi Travnik and Rama and, in January 1993 in Gornji Vakuh/Uskoplje and Lašva Valley, the Muslim-Croat war in Bosnia and Herzegovina lasted uninterruptedly from April 1993 (ARBiH's attack on HVO in Konjic and Jablanica) until the signing of the Croat-Bosniak peace agreement in Washington (USA) on March 18, 1994.⁴²

ic, Catholic and Orthodox Christian faiths," thus negating the existence of Croats in BiH. Arif Pašalić, the first commander of the 4th Corps ARBiH, stated, at the beginning on 1994, "There's no Croatian people" in BiH. Clarifying the statement, he said, "Catholic Bosnians," "Bosnians Bosniak-Muslims" and "Bosnians Orthodox Christians" live in BiH. "Nema hrvatskog naroda u BiH" (There is no Croatian people in BiH), *Danas* (Zagreb), vol. II, issue 59, February 22, 1994, pp. 9-10; Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 306.

⁴¹ Marijan et al., *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini, 1991. - 1995.*, 135.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 171.

The victorious operations of the Croatian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina against the Serb forces facilitated the reaching of agreement in Dayton (Ohio, USA) on November 21, 1995 (Dayton Agreement) and its signing in Paris on December 14, 1995. With this agreement Bosnia and Herzegovina was established, or, in other words divided as a state featuring two entities, that is, two territorial units and three constitutive peoples. BiH Federation got 51% of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Serb entity (Serbian Republic) got 49% of the territory, despite the fact that the Serb leaders and Serb policies were proclaimed as the main culprits for the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia. With that, the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that had begun in the summer of 1991 by Serbia, or in other words, the YPA and Serb forces with an attack on Croatia (at the beginning of October 1991 they were joined by Montenegrin forces) came to an end. However, the guaranteed right of the refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes was not realized, especially in the Serbian Republic in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When analyzing the role of the Croats and Croatia, that is, the role of the Croatian policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, one cannot gloss over the chronology of the events in question and key facts:

- the voting of the Croats in the referendum on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence (February 29 and March 1, 1992), supported by the Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, was decisive for the success of the referendum.
- Croatia recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state on April 7, 1992, immediately after the countries of the European Community had done so, and on the same day when the USA did. Serbia did not recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina until after the war.
- Croatian forces (and ARBiH) participated in defending a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Serb aggression: in 1992 they prevented the Serb from capturing the strategically pivotal areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar, Neretva Valley, part of Bosnian Posavina, the areas of Livno, Tomislavgrad and Rama), and in 1995 they gained control of a large swathe of territory (more than 5,000 square kilometers) in western and southwestern Bosnia; then, with Operation Storm Croatian forces enabled the breaking of the siege of Bihać, which had been in Serb encirclement for 1,201 days. Thus, the Croatian forces saved the lives of thousands of Bosniaks-Muslims in the Bihać area.
- the Croatian Army forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina were deployed, for the most part, against the Serbian forces, in part on the strength of the agreement between the Croatian and Bosniak-Muslim leaderships, and for the purpose of preventing Serb attacks from Bosnia and Herzegovina on Croatia and protecting the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovi-

- na from Serb aggression. A small number, mostly volunteers with BiH ancestry and under the command of the HVO, fought against ARBiH attacks on Croatian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muslims from other Yugoslav republics and Muslim warriors (Mujahedeen) from various parts of the world served in the ARBiH formations that attacked the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of these Muslim volunteers was not smaller than that of Croatian volunteers from the Croatian Army serving under HVO command.
- the Croatian leadership accepted all the recommendations of the international community on solving the conflict and internal system of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
 - the Croatian Community Herzeg-Bosnia (November 18, 1991) and its administrative and military organization HVO (April 8 1992) were created as a reaction to the immediately preceding events (Serb occupation of and massacre of Croats in Vukovar and Škabrnja) and to the decisions of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina during a period of time marked by uncertainty and for the purpose of protecting the Croats from imminent Serb aggression.
 - the Croatian Republic Herzeg-Bosnia was proclaimed (August 28, 1993) in accordance with the peace plans, that were relevant at the time, of the international community on internal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina to three entities (Cutileiro's plan for canonization of Bosnia and Herzegovina or Lisbon Agreement, March 18, 1992; Vance-Owen plan for internal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina to nine provinces and Sarajevo area, the beginning of January 1993), and especially in accordance with the most recently proposed (August 20, 1993) Owen-Stoltenberg peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina on a union of three republics. When that plan was put on the table, the ARBiH attacked the HVO (the Republic of Croatia supported all three plans).
 - during the war in BiH Croatia took in refugees and displaced persons from that country irrespective of their nationality and religious affiliation; at the beginning of December 1992 Croatia took in more than 200,000 Muslims. From the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the middle of March 1994, which is to say even during the armed conflict between the ARBiH and the HVO, the Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Refugees and Displaced Persons helped to take care of about 425,000 Muslims; at the same time, in Croatian hospitals, alongside wounded HVO members, more than 10,000 wounded members of the ARBiH and Muslim civilians were treated (the number does not include patients suffering from diseases and ailments). From the beginning of Serb aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina logistics ARBiH bases were located in the Republic of Croatia.

Finally, the policies of the then Croatian leadership and President Tuđman towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, towards the other peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, without which Bosnia and Hercegovina would not have survived as a state, could be summarized by the speeches made by President Tuđman at the 9th Session of the Defense Council and National Security on May 11, 1993 (the session was not open to the public), when he said that he supported “Bosnia and Herzegovina not as a unitary state but as a union of three constitutive peoples on confederate basis” and by the speech of the Defense Minister Gojko Šušak (who was in that function during the war) on March 8, 1994 in Livno, when he stated that “a Muslim in Livno or a Serb in Mostar does not enjoy the same rights as a Croat”, because this was a guarantee that the Croats in other parts of the country would enjoy the same rights.

In 1991 Croatia managed to defend itself against the Serb aggression. By the end of August 1995 Croatia had, with its own armed forces, liberated most of the occupied territories and secured the conditions for returning the remaining occupied territory in Croatian Danube Region into its fold. Also, Croatia saved neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina from falling prey to the Greater Serbian policies and enabled Bosnia and Herzegovina to realize its internationally recognized right to exist within the borders it inherited from the former SFRY.

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