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The Krajina Chronicle

A History of Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia

The Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies
Chicago-Ottawa-London
2010

ISBN 978-1-892478-10-8

Table of Contents

Note on Pronunciation

Most linguists outside the Balkans regard the Serbian and Croatian (as well as 'Bosnian' and 'Montenegrin') as one language with minor structural, lexical and idiomatic differences. International linguistic authorities continue to refer to it as 'Serbo-Croat' or, less contentiously, as 'Serbian/Croatian.' Both are based on the *Shtokavian* dialect. They are mutually intelligible. The Serbian Cyrillic alphabet was devised by Vuk Karadžić and its Latin equivalent is based on Ljudevit Gaj's reform. The orthography is consistent and reflects the norm "Write as you speak, read as it is written." Serbian/Croatian words and names used in this book are given in the Latin script and commonly should be pronounced as follows:

a – *a* as in f*a*ther (long), ab*o*ve (short)
c – ts as in ra*ts*
ć - 'soft' ch, as in Pacino, chilli
č - 'hard' ch, as in chalk, cello
dj or đ – g as in gender, or j as in juice
dž – 'dzh' as in jam, edge
e – as in p*e*t (short), or grey (long)
g – as in go (never as g in 'large'!)
h – 'kh' (gutteral), as in loch
i – as in pin (short) or mach*i*ne (long)
j – y as in yet or yes
lj – li as in million, halyard
nj – ni as in dominion, canyon
o - o as in up*o*n
s – as in hi*ss*
š - sh as in shawl, sugar
u - u as in rule
ž - zh, as in French *jour*

Preface

In August 1995, the television news showed roads jammed with tractors and horse-drawn carts fleeing a region known as the Krajina. It was the largest episode of ethnic cleansing in the wars of Yugoslav succession. A quarter of a million Serbs inhabiting the western parts of the old Habsburg Military Border passed into exile.

Krajina in various versions is a Slavic toponym which means 'borderland.' The Military Border, the Habsburgs' *Militärgrenze,* was once the name of a string of territories whose history is far older and longer than the short history of the South Slav state. It was an essential link in the chain defending Europe from the Ottoman onslaught at a time of supreme peril in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The tourists have returned to the Dalmatian coast, but most Serbs have not come back to their homes in the towns and villages of the Adriatic hinterland. Even more lived in the districts of Lika, Banija and Kordun, which lie across the Dinaric Alps, along rivers that run into the Sava, and in two pockets of western and eastern Slavonia further down the Sava, where the river flows east towards the Danube and Belgrade.

The Krajina Serbs rose in arms to defend their districts in 1991 and held them for four years, just as they had fought in the same places, and against worse odds, in 1941. Many of their ancestors had been settled there centuries before by Hungarian kings, Austrian kaisers and Venetian governors for the express purpose of defending their lands against Ottoman invasion, and – in Habsburg lands – with the express liberty of not being subject to Croatian laws and taxes. In August 1995 they fled en masse, and few have come back.

For many generations the Serbian population of these regions was periodically decimated by warfare in the service of the Austrian Emperor. In 1941-1945 the Serbs were subject to a

genocidal attack after the Germans put the Croatian Ustaša movement in power in Zagreb. Their resistance to this slaughter and the ensuing epic struggle is a large part of the story both of the royalist Četniks and of their bitter rivals for post-war power, Communist-led 'Yugoslav' Partisans.

In 1990-1991 Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia a second time. Once again the Serbs of the old Krajina took up arms against the Croatian secession and a short-lived *Republika Srpska Krajina* emerged. It covered part, but not the whole, of the old Military Frontier, as well as some former Venetian possessions in Dalmatia that had not been included in the Habsburg Military Border. This latter-day Krajina perished in August 1995, when the order came from Belgrade to withdraw, rather than fight, in the face of a well-signalled Croatian offensive. The result has been devastating for the community. A quarter of the population of today's Croatia was Serbian before 1914; a fifth before 1941; a sixth before 1991; today it is but five percent.

It is sometimes said that the bitter quarrels of Serbs and Croats in the 20th century are a modern phenomenon, no older than the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918. It is true that the Serbs of Serbia, when it was a small state south of the Sava and the Danube, as yet untied from the Ottoman empire, had no direct or traditional quarrel with the Croats of Croatia, the Habsburg territory whose principal concern was with imperial masters in Budapest and Vienna. More exactly, the Croats living in 'Civil Croatia' – the heartland around Zagreb that did not belong to the Military Frontier – and Serbs living in the former Ottoman *pashaluk* of Belgrade had nothing to quarrel about before 1918. But the seeds of the legendary quarrel between Serbs and Croats in the Yugoslav era were sown in the Krajina long before. The legal status and privileges of the Military Border were detested by the Croatian nobility from the moment the Border was formed in the 16th century to the time it was dissolved in 1881.

From the moment of its creation, on the ruins of the old Europe at the end of the Great War, until its final disintegration

almost seven and a half decades later, Yugoslavia was beset by national problems. Those national problems proved impossible to solve, in the 'first,' royalist Yugoslavia (1918-1941) no less than the 'second,' Communist one (1945-1991). Structural deficiencies of Yugoslavia, as a state and as a polity, were fundamental, which precluded the emergence of a viable political system. From the outset the issue of Serb-Croat relations was at the core of the problem. Those relations were plagued by an ambivalent legacy of the previous three centuries in the Krajina. Serb-Croat relations could have remained ambivalent but tractable, had the two nations not been placed under the same roof.

In some ways the Krajina was the nursery of Yugoslavia. Both the acute anxieties of nineteenth-century Croatian nationalists about the Serbs and the possibilities of 'Illyrian' or South Slav co-operation are hard to comprehend if the history of the Krajina is not understood. This book is presented in the hope that it can and will be better understood. The only way we can meaningfully judge the present is by the example of the past.

On those rare occasions when the Serbs and the Croats worked together, Austria or Hungary hastened to pull them apart again – to divide and conquer. The Military Border, though it lost its traditional legal status in 1881, had a personality too marked by warfare and identity not to persist in political life, in rebellion and occupation. Without the Military Border, the venom of Croatian genocidal fascism in 1941 is inexplicable; without the fighting instinct of the Krajina Serbs, the two resistance movements in Yugoslavia would have been deprived of a major fighting component.

The war of 1991-1995 in the Krajina was a curious affair. Belgrade was itself in turmoil in 1991. It encouraged the Krajina's rejection of the new Croatia, but that is as far as it went. The Krajina become a pawn to be advanced or sacrificed as needed. The Krajina Serbs, a poor people many of whom lived in poor territories, were always a bargaining chip in the unstrategic mind of Slobodan Milošević. The war, as conducted

on the part of the post-Communist, quasi-nationalist political establishment in Belgrade, was devoid of any strategic sense. For four years, under military discipline, the Krajina Serbs were obliged to sit still as their enemies grew stronger. Finally, in the summer of 1995 – still under military discipline – they were ordered to abandon their homeland, to which but a few have returned over the past 15 years.

This book is dedicated to the memory of their forefathers and to the hope that their homes and their lands will be restored, in the fullness of time, to their rightful owners.

Chicago, Easter 2010 The Author

The Setting

The history of the Balkan Peninsula is the history of migrations. It is commonly accepted that the most important one – the great movement of Slavs into the region – took place in the late 6th and the first half of the 7th centuries. Unlike their Germanic predecessors, however, the Slavs, as agrarian settlers, came to stay. Within decades they were to be found in compact settlements from the foothills of the Julian Alps to the Isthmus of Corinth. Their tribal self-rule replaced imperial Byzantine authorities, but their statehood was slow to develop.

The Balkan peninsula is the area of Europe south of the line extending from Istria (on the Adriatic) in the northwest along the Kupa, Sava and Danube rivers in the north, to the Danube Delta and the Black Sea in the north-east. Unlike other south European peninsular regions – Iberia and Italy – the northern boundary of the Balkans is not marked by mountain ranges that sharply separate the peninsula from the heartland of Europe. On the contrary, the boundary is long and wide open, marked by easily fordable rivers, and criss-crossed by several key transit corridors that connect Central and Western Europe with the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean.

Hauntingly beautiful in many parts but relatively poor in natural resources and, south of the Danube and the Sava, with few large tracts of fertile soil, the region is significant mainly because of its location. Its geographic position has been the bane of its history, inviting invaders and turning the region into an object of competing designs and interests of the great powers for much of its history. The key transit route runs along the Sava, Morava and Vardar rivers from the Julian Alps to Greece. This key corridor has been deemed worthy of considerable investment in blood and treasure, from the times of the empires of Rome,

Byzantium, Turkey and Austria to both world wars, and on to our own time.

The Serbs' Balkan heartland, their first known political entity, was the region of Raška, in today's southwestern Serbia. It gave them a geographic name, *Rascians*, by which they were often known for many centuries thereafter. How and when they came there is still a matter of some dispute. In most parts of the Balkan Peninsula, they, like the Croats to their northwest, and Bulgarians to their southeast, expelled or assimilated the native population. On the Adriatic coast, however, the Slav newcomers were confronted by the affluent maritime city-states. They were highly civilized and able to rely on the support, cultural no less than material, of their kin in Italy.

While the rural districts were soon populated by the Slavs, the late Roman, proto-Italian population moved for safety to the walled cities of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Zara (Zadar), Spalato

Slavic groups in the Balkans (7th–8th century c.e.)

(Split), Trogir (Trau), and other coastal towns. The western Balkan region between the Germans in the Alps and the Greeks of Epirus was shared between three ethnicities: Serb, Croat and Albanian. Their modern rivalries are partly rooted in the clash of Roman and Byzantine ecclestiastical jurisdictions. That clash contributed to the schism between Eastern and Western Christianity that was made final in 1054. The Albanians, Croats and Dalmatian Latins were to be mostly Catholic, and the Serbs mostly Orthodox – until Islam arrived to complicate the picture.

The presence of the Serbs in many parts of today's Croatia – notably in Dalmatia and along the Adriatic littoral – harks back to the early medieval times. A host of ancient toponyms, contemporary chronicles and historical monuments relating to the Serb name antedate by hundreds of years the major population shifts across the Western Balkans induced by the Turkish onslaught in the 15th and 16th centuries. The earliest specific reference dates from the early 9th century. In 822 the annals of the Frankish chronologist Einhard (c. 775-840, shown l. in a contemporary miniature) referred to the uprising of the Lower Pannonian prince Louis (Ljudevit, 818-823). Einhard relates that Louis escaped from Sisak and went south, "towards the Serbs, who are said to inhabit the greater part of Dalmatia."[1] The Byzantine province of Dalmatia extended at that time from the Adriatic coast over a hundred miles inland, covering much of the hinterland and western Bosnia.

The Croats, who settled the neighboring territories to the north, are conspicuously absent from Einhard's account. They are mentioned for the first time some three decades later, in 852, in the *Charter of Prince Trpimir*. Their language was Slavic, although their origins are still a subject of debate; Gothic,

[1] *Liudevitus Siscia civitate relicta, ad Sorabos, quae natio magnam Dalmatie partem obtinere dicitur, fugiendo se contulit*.

Sarmatian, and even Iranian 'theories' have been advanced over the years. Their early Balkan heartland, ruled by *Bans*, extended from Istria in the northeast to the Cetina river in the southwest, and as far as the Vrbas river (in today's Bosnia) to the east, with additional settlements soon spreading into today's Slavonia.

Two early Croat states came into being in the ninth century, in the Panonian plain and along the Adriatic coast. They were merged into a single domain by Duke (*dux Croatorum*) Tomislav Trpimirović, who is said to have received letter from the pope granting him the royal title in 925. He was able to raise his rank and increase his holdings at a time of trouble in all neighboring states. Byzantium was weakened by Arab attacks, iconoclasm, and dynastic disputes; the heirs of Charlemagne were unable to hold local magnates in check; the newly arrived Hungarians – still pagans – were wreaking havoc in the heart of the continent; and Pope John X needed local allies to keep Dalmatia, which he had only recently gained from the Byzantines. The facts of the case are uncertain, however, as there is no primary evidence, reliable documents and eyewitness accounts. What we know of Tomislav comes from chroniclers who may have had a political axe to grind. Tomislav vanished from history after 928 and some historians suggest that he might have been poisoned on orders from Rome. At the time of his death the discord over whether the liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia would be Latin or Slavic was still unresolved.

The names 'Serb' and 'Croat' implied supra-tribal entities, groups that were early 'nationalities,' yet far from state-defined nationhood. In the 10th century Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (r. 913-959), in his *De Administrando Imperio*, offered a wealth of information (not uniformly reliable) on the Slavic peoples – *hai Sklabeniai* – of the Balkans.[2] The Croats, he relates, came to the northeastern shores of the Adriatic in the early 7th century led by five brothers and two sisters. They

[2] Constantine Porphyrogenitus: *De Administrando Imperio*. Dumbarton Oaks Texts, 2009.

killed their Avar overlords on the advice of Emperor Heraclius and took over the land. It is noteworthy that Porphyrogenitus does not mention Tomislav. The Serbs, he says, were granted land by Heraclius in the vicinity of Salonica but were not satisfied with it and moved "beyond the Danube." Heraclius subsequently asked them to settle along the Adriatic Coast, in the areas ravaged by Avar raids in two preceding decades.

In Chapter 32, "On the Serbs and the lands in which they live," Porphyrogenitus placed them in Bosnia and along the Adriatic littoral. The rather vague description of the Byzantine Emperor can be validated with greater precision by the rise of a Serbian Prince, Bodin, in the area of Knin in the Dalmatian hinterland, and by the presence of ancient Orthodox churches built in the Zeta-Zahum style in that region. The western boundary of Serbian Cyrillic tombstones ran at that time from Poljice near Split to Benkovac and thence due north to the area of Kordun which adjoins, on the Croatian side, Bosnia's northwestern tip.[3]

The Hungarians staked a claim to the northeastern Adriatic after a weakened Croatia was taken over by King Koloman of the Hungarian Arpad dynasty in 1102. The agreement regulating the personal union of Hungary and Croatia, known as *Pacta Conventa*, preserved certain privileges of the Croatian nobility. They were taken, in subsequent centuries, to imply the unbroken continuity of Croatia's distinct statehood..

In 1166-1168 Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the medieval Serbian state, took control of the coastline from northern Dalmatia to today's Albania. His younger son Sava, subsequently canonized as the founder of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, established the diocese of Hum in this region in 1219. Its seat was in the city of Ston, linking the Sabioncello (Pelješac) peninsula with the Hum mainland. By the late medieval times, compact settlements of Serbs were

[3] Cf. Djordje Janković. *Tradicionalna kultura Srba u Srspkoj Krajini i Hrvatskoj*. Beograd: Etnografski muzej, 2000.

established further north, in central and northern Dalmatia, along the Krka and Cetina rivers. The oldest major Orthodox monastery in the region, Krupa (r.), dedicated to the Ascension of the Mother of God, was founded in 1317. Its building was paid for in part by two prominent Serbian kings, Dragutin and Milutin, and it was later endowed by the most powerful medieval Serbian king (later *Tsar*, 'Emperor') Stefan Dušan.

By the middle of the 14th century, Serbs were present in and around the fortified cities of Clissa (Klis) and Scardona (Skradin) in central and northern Dalmatia. Their settlement coincided with the arrival of Jelena, King Dušan's sister, who was married to a local prince, Mladen II Šubić of Bribir. A detachment of her brother's Serbian soldiers accompanied her to Dalmatia and remained there, initially as her retinue and then as her husband's mercenaries. By that time one's denominational allegiance had already become largely synonymous with national identity. Along the Balkan fault line between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism the struggle for this allegiance has only intensified in subsequent centuries.

Princess Jelena, a Serb, was a patron of several Orthodox churches and monasteries in the region, although her husband, a Croat, was a Roman Catholic. Her spiritual advisor was one monk Rufim, who accompanied Jelena to her new abode and soon thereafter invited three monks from the heartland of Orthodoxy at Mt. Athos to join him. They are believed to have been the first occupants of the current seat of the Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Dalmatia, the monastery dedicated to Archangel Michael (*Krka,* next p. r.), built in 1350.

The influx of Serbs continued under Tvrtko I (1354-1391), who in 1377 was crowned 'King of the Serbs and Bosnia.'[4] By the 15th century the entire region of Knin, with the villages of Golubić, Padjene and Polača, had an Orthodox majority.

Dalmatia was never fully Italian, and largely Slavic by the eighth century. The coastal communes were born with Greek names and their loyalty was Roman. They spoke a Romance language which died out in the medieval period to be replaced with Italian, or with Italian-Slav bilinguality. Political appetites soon followed linguistic and cultural penetration. Venice showed its hunger for Dalmatia by diverting the Fourth Crusade to sack and subdue the rich city of Zara in 1202 (repeating the crime on a grand scale in Constantinople in 1204). From the north, Croatian magnates sought to impose themselves in the name of the Hungarian king. Hungary wanted to tax the rich Dalmatian communes, while the cities tried to play Venice and Hungary against each other. The medieval and renaissance culture of Slavic Dalmatia is undifferentiated in terms of later national identity.

P. 16 intentionally left out

[4] "Hic [Tvartkus] inplicitus cura esset erroribus et schismate Graecorum, a patrui virtute ec religione longe multumque degeneravit, haereticis perfugium ac patrocinium praebuit, catholicos quinuscumque potuitmodisvexavit." Daniele Farlati, *Illyricum Sacrum*, IV, p. 172. The religion in medieval Bosnia is still a contentious issue; it was syncretic and without distinct character.

The Military Border

The first Islamic invasions of Europe were stopped thirteen centuries ago. One failed at the walls of Constantinople where the Byzantines withstood the great Arab sieges of 674-678 and 717-718. The Arabs also crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, took most of Spain, and were turned back at Tours by Charles Martel in 732. The defence of Constantinople saved the Greek empire for another seven centuries; the battle of Tours protected the Latin West from destruction before its own medieval civilization had developed. The Arabs controlled Sicily for a time and threatened mainland Italy and Dalmatia, but the Normans took Sicily just before they conquered England. At sea, Byzantium, and then Venice, were strong enough to keep Saracen piracy in check, although the Barbary corsairs remained a problem for centuries.

The next great Muslim attack by land came centuries later, and it was Turkish. This assault developed slowly after the Byzantines lost Anatolia in the late eleventh century. In 1354, the Turks, led by the new Ottoman (Osman) dynasty, crossed the Dardanelles from Asia Minor and established a foothold on the European shore. The line of the attack went from Thrace via Macedonia to Kosovo; through Rascia (later known under the Ottomans as the 'Sanjak') into Bosnia, and all the way to the Una river. It was finally stopped by Venice and the Habsburgs in the 16th century.

The Ottoman conquest all but destroyed a rich Christian civilization in the Balkan peninsula. Although Byzantium was, after 1354, a spent force as an empire, Serbia and Bulgaria, its dynamic and creative Slavic offspring, were flourishing states and Hungary was a major power. The Dalmatian communes – Ragusa, Zara, Spalato, Sebenico, Scardona and many others – kept the South Slav world in contact with Italian culture and commerce. But the Ottomans at their zenith ruled all of the

Balkans except the outer fringe of Hungary and a few of those fortified Dalmatian cities which Venice could support. Ragusa (Dubrovnik) only retained its independence by paying tribute to the Sultan. The destruction caused by Turkish conquest was phenomenal; recovery was slow and partial.

The conquest was never secure, however, and it remained contested both internally and externally. The conquered towns became largely Muslim, the countryside remained largely Christian. The subjugated Christian populations became second-class citizens (*dhimmis*) whose security required obedience to the Muslim masters. They were heavily taxed (*jizya*, or poll tax, and *kharaj*) and subjected to the practice of *devshirme*: the 'blood levy,' introduced in the 1350s, of a fifth of all Christian boys in the conquered lands to be converted to Islam and trained as janissaries. In the collective memory of the Balkan Christian nations, half a millenium of Turkish conquest and overlordship – with all their consequences, cultural, social, and political – are carved as an unmitigated disaster:

> If any single factor made the Balkans what they were in history – and what they still are today – it was the ordeal of the Turk... The image of Turkey was that of a rotting empire, of a corrupt, incompetent and sadistic national elite preying on the subject Balkan peoples – of a cynical government whose very method of rule was atrocity.[5]

The dynamism and effectiveness of the early Ottoman system were undeniable. In the middle of the 16th century Turkish military forces were more undeniably more effective and in many respects more "professional" than their European opponents. In the Balkans they grew stronger, becoming as Slav and Albanian as Turkish in the process. Perpetual warfare was supported by a huge taxation base of Christian *dhimmis* subjected to the rigors of sharia.

[5] Edmund Stillman, *The Balkans*. New York: Time-Life, 1967, p. 43.

The host set out every year to defend or extend that base. The Ottoman army was strong in highly skilled light cavalry (*akinci,* raiders, shown in a contemporary gravure) who could campaign on their own when they were not attached to the main Ottoman host. The *akinci* were more numerous than the janissary infantry and more important in securing consistent military success.

As the Turks moved northward over the two centuries after the battle of Kosovo (1389), they pushed ahead of them a no-man's land known as *serhat*. Turkish conquest was usually preceded by decades of *akinci* raiding to seize Christian slaves and goods and designed to lay waste to enemy territories and weaken resistance to eventual conquest. This was the crucial feature of Ottoman warfare and has left a lasting mark. It created wastelands on both the Turkish and the Christian side of the imperial borders. In the course of the fifteenth century Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina were annexed one by one setting off waves of emigration into Croatia and Dalmatia. Tens of thousands of mostly Orthodox Christians, escaping the onslaught, moved into depopulated lands between the Pannonian plain and the Adriatic that were ravaged by constant Turkish intrusions. Others were settled by Ottomans on their own side of the expanding border as privileged Christian groups (*martoloses;* Greek: *armatolos*), but many switched sides and emigrated when their privileges were withdrawn by Sultan Suleiman.

Some Ottoman raids reached as far as Friuli and Austria. In 1493 a Croatian force of 8,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry tried to intercept an *akinci* raiding force of 8,000 and was destroyed at Krbava. Areas of today's southwestern Croatia, badly devastated after this Turkish victory, were referred to as *desertum primum*; the area further north, periodically attacked throughout the 16th

century, was known as *desertum secundum*. Attempts were made from the beginning to repopulate the territories. Christian settlers from Turkish-controlled lands, mainly of Orthodox faith, became a majority population in both by the early 16th century. The need to use them in defense against Ottoman incursions required the Hungarian-Croat kingdom, and later the Austrians, to consider grants of privilege designed to give them a personal stake in their lands. It was also necessary to create areas of discipline which protected more settled areas further north and west from an influx of refugees from Turkish territory. The result was a series of measures to defend the border against the Turks, to control flight beyond the border belt, and to restore economic life and political authority in a wasted no-man's land.

Pages 21-70 intentionally left out

Ideology of State Rights

The historicist notion of Croatia's 'state rights,' based on the tradition supposedly harking back to the *Pacta Conventa*, inspired a radical form of Croatian nationalist ideology known as 'Rightism' (pravaštvo). Starting in the early 1850's, it was articulated by publicist and political activist Ante Starčević (1823-1896). Starčević's nationalism did not recognize the existence of Serbs – or, indeed, any other South Slavs west of Bulgaria – as distinct nations. To him they were all Croats, including not only Slovenes and Bosnian Muslims but also those people "mistakenly called *Serbs*" who should come to their senses and return to the Croat fold. Those "Croats of Orthodox faith" who obstinately refused to do so were *Slavo-Serbs* ultimately deserving of physical extermination. Starčević took as a model the Hungarian claim, launched at the end of the 18th century, that domicile in a particular polity rather than national culture defined nationhood, and that on the soil of Hungary there existed only one people. Starčević likewise proclaimed that in the territory of Croatia there was only one 'state-bearing' or 'political,' or, in modern parlance, *constitutive* nation: the Croatian nation.

Starčević's sentiments were soon expressed in the political arena. Following the end of Bach's absolutism in 1860, the Croatian political scene was dominated by the autonomist, implicitly pro-Austrian People's Party (Strossmayerists) and the pro-Magyar Unionist Party. The *Party of Rights* was founded in 1861 by Starčević and his leading follower Eugen Kvaternik with the slogan 'Neither Vienna nor Pest, but a free and self-governing Croatia.' It quickly became a key player in the political life of Croatia-Slavonia. The 'Rightists' allowed for the possibility of a personal union with the rest of the Monarchy, but only if such union was based on Croatia's full sovereignty. The

party attracted support mainly from the lower middle class which emerged from the ruins of the post-1848 feudal system.

Rightism may be connected in a direct line of development with the modern Croatian political mainstream. In addition to the clamoring for sovereign statehood, its defining trait was an extreme antagonism, bordering on obsession, towards the Serbs. The roots of this antagonism harked to the Serbs' special status as free, self-governed farmer-warriors who were not subjected to Croatian writ. They were successful in preserving their name, privileges, traditions, and religion under often trying conditions. By the time of the winding down of the Military Border they accounted for over a quarter of the population of today's Croatia and constituted a majority in a third of its territory. Most of them were farmers and soldiers, but in the final decades of the 19th century significant numbers were making inroads into the professions and commerce and competing with the young Croat bourgeoisie. If their presence and separate status had been an irritant to the Croatian-Hungarian feudal nobility and clergy in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was an even more acute thorn in the side of 19th century nationalists. They denied that those people were 'Serbs' in the first place.

With the emergence of the Party of Rights the social and political realignment of Croatian society in the second half of the 19th century was well under way. It reflected the maturing of the Croatian national identity, centered on the young bourgeoisie, and the associated demand for statehood as an essential expression of that identity. Starčević (shown in a 20th century monument in Zagreb, r.) and Kvaternik argued that the essence of Croatian nationhood was woven into the totality of the Croats' historical experience. Medieval institutions, reduced to the *Ancient Rights* and robbed of context and nuance, were to provide the political foundation.

The language, as restructured by the Illyrians, provided its cultural-emotional identity. Starčević treated the resulting Nation as a distinct, homogenous, organically structured personality. Members of the nation had to transcend the old, false identity based on the self, and perceive themselves as members of the corporate national entity. Any disagreement with this model was, to him, either an expression of 'deformity' caused by the long period of foreign rule, or else treason pure and simple. His messianic zeal led him to claim that only God was fit to judge his actions. 'God and the Croats' (*Bog i Hrvati*) was a Rightist slogan coined in the 1860s that has found resonance ever since. Starčević claimed that the Serbs did not exist, that they were 'a geographic term,' not a people.[6] He also proclaimed the Croatian separation not just from Serbs, but from Slavs as well:

> Who cannot see that the words Slav and Serb are the same in meaning, for both of those words can replace the word 'foreign'… The Croatian people view that Slavo-Serbian blood as foreign: the Croatian people will not stand by as these foreign people defile the holy land of Croats.

His followers wrote in the same vein. Fr. Mihovil Pavlinović, a deputy in the Dalmatian Diet (see pp. 66-67), argued that "in Croatia, whatever religion one wants to be, whatever name one calls himself, everyone is born a Croat," and ended his history of modern Dalmatia with a lament that "it is in truth only that the unfortunate name divides," and a plea that "we should all, regardless of names, be the builders of one single future; *regardless of any one of us regarding himself as a member of another nationality* [emphasis added], let us be conscious Croatian citizens."[7]

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[6] Ferdo Šišić, "O stogodišnjici Ilirskog pokreta." *Ljetopis Jugoslavenske akademije*, Zagreb, Vol. 49-1936.

[7] Mihovio [Mihovil] Pavlinović: *Misao hrvatska i misao srbska u Dalmaciji, od godine 1848 do godine 1882*. Zadar, 1882.

Vjekoslav Klaić, leading nationalist historian at the turn of the century, held that 'the true national name' for all people between Istria and Bulgaria was *Croat*, while *Serb* was to him a 'tribal name': every Serb is a Croat, Klaić wrote, but a Croat is not a Serb.[8] Frano Supilo, a *Pravaš* politician who would eventually evolve into a proponent of South Slav unity, argued in the 1890s that Croats had to be clear about the "so-called" Serbian question: "Admittedly, there are Serbs, but in our lands there are no Serbs. Those in Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia who call themselves Serbs, are not Serbs but Orthodox Croats."[9] Having denied the Serbs' existence, the followers of Starčević advanced territorial and ethnic claims verging on the insane:

> The lands to which Croatia's state rights extended, in terms of history and nationality, stretch from Germany to Macedonia, from the Danube to the [Adriatic] sea. According to their separate provincial names, they are: Southern Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, Istria, Croatia, Slavonia, Krajina, Dalmatia, Upper Albania, Montenegro, Hercegovina, Bosnia, Rascia, Serbia; yet they all have one true name: the State of Croatia. The inhabitants of these lands number up to eight million people.[10]

An early Croat advocate of Yugoslavism, Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac, commented a century and a half ago that a discourse of this kind was detrimental to Croats and Serbs alike. This may be "wishful thinking born of fiery patriotism," he wrote, but it is also "pure arrogance and ignorance of people's nature. Doomed to fail, it has merely increased the rift between the two most progressive and hardiest South Slav peoples, the Croats and the Serbs, and virtually turned it into national hatred."[11]

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[8] Vjekoslav Klaić: „Hrvati i Srbi." *Vienac***,** 1893, ch. 2, p. 25.

[9] *Crvena Hrvatska* (Dubrovnik), V, br. 26, 29. V. 1895.

[10] *Hervatska*, No. 6, 1871.

[11] Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac, *Pitanje austrijsko: Kome i kada valja rešiti ga?* Paris 1866, pp. 77-78. Quoted by Krestić, op. cit. (1998), pp. 26-28.

Starčević's discourse, painfully 'modern' in its rhetoric and implications, was some decades ahead of his time. His opus provides a rare specifically *Croatian* contribution to the European history of ideas. The word 'genocide' was some 75 years from being invented when Starčević wrote that the Serbs are "the race of slaves, beasts worse than any other" and fit for extermination:

> There are three levels of perfection: that of the animal, that of comprehension, and that of reason. Slavo-Serbs have not quite reached the first level, and cannot rise above it. They have no conscience, they do not know how to read as humans, they are not teachable... Some call a magnitude of Croatia's populace 'Serbs' and a piece of Croat land 'Serbia' based on a name which they do not understand.[12]

Such language was novel in the European mainstream discourse of its time. Starčević's dehumanization of 'the Other,' the prerequisite of an eventual *final solution*, was unrestrained. "Give this beast breed a little bread, then strike it with an axe and skin it to the bone," was his final dictum on the Serb. Vladimir Dvorniković, renown Croatian anthropologist, remarked in 1939,

> Never before had a tribal, atavistic urge entered with such irrational force into the world of political formulae and programs as it did with Starčević's all-Croatness. At a time when two Serb states were already in existence, his notion of Croatizing South Slavs and his 'denying' of the Serbs and Slovenes was truly nonsensical.[13]

Starčević's opus has earned him, among the followers, the title of the 'Father of the Nation' – a designation approvingly revived in our time: there is hardly a town, in today's Croatia, without a street, a square, or an institution named after him.

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[12] Ante Starčević, *Razgovori.* Djela, Vol 3. Zagreb 1894, p. 213.

[13] Vladimir Dvorniković. *Karakterologija Jugoslavena*. Beograd: Gregorić, 1939, p. 894.

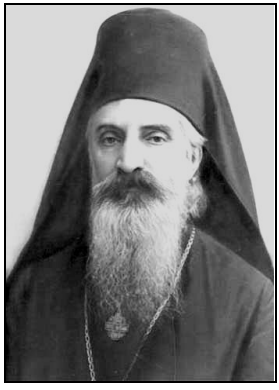
Among the Serbs a parallel theme was developed by the linguistic reformer Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. He, too, subscribed to the popular 19th century dictum that nation was defined by language, and claimed that, therefore, all people who spoke Serbian (štokavian) were in fact Serbs, including Croats. Yet "Serbs, All and Everywhere" (*Srbi svi i svuda*), his famous article on this subject, did not have much impact on the Serbs' political discourse, in stark contrast to Starčević's impact on his audience. Had it been developed as a salient theme of Serbian politics and attitudes, the notion that all štokavian speakers were 'Serbs' would have justified the 'Greater-Serbian' accusation often directed against Belgrade in subsequent decades. In fact Karadžić's influence on Serbian culture was enormous but his impact on Serbian politics was not. Starčević mattered. His work ensured that, after the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* of 1867 and the Nagodba of 1868, Serbs in Croatia-Slavonia proved reluctant to support the Croat cause of resisting Hungarian domination.

In Dalmatia, Croat identity was developed as an anti-Italian reflex before it turned on the Serbs. The coastal province was in a different position from Croatia-Slavonia. There were three nationalities to consider, and the language of administration had been Italian for centuries. But Dalmatia had been 'Hungarian' – and so at least indirectly 'Croatian' – long before the Ottomans came. Croatian claims to it were officially ignored and quietly resisted, until Vienna began to see anything Italian as treacherous. After the Italian provinces were lost in 1866, Vienna turned hostile and moved steadily towards Croatia's annexationist position. The use of Italian was restricted, to take one example, and schools told to use 'Slavic.' In the new climate some influential Dalmatian Serb leaders – notably Serbian Orthodox Bishop Nikodim Milaš (opp. p. r.) supported continued Dalmatian autonomy under Austria, rather than its unification with Croatia-Slavonia. The process led to further estrangement and the creation of Croat and Serb political parties with national programs and slogans. "We'll annihilate you," Rightist deputy

Ante Trumbić told the Italians in 1898.[14] He meant that their status as the defining population of Dalmatia would be erased, and indeed it was: by the turn of the century the Serb-Croat rivalry had taken the place of the old, Italian-Slav one. That rivalry escalated in the 1900s. Writing between the wars a Dubrovnik writer, Count Lujo Vojnović, protested wanton Croatization of his city's past:

> We are tired of this misuse of the name *Croat* and *Croatian*; this misuse does not come out of people's will, but out of certain elements which, with incredibly clever propaganda (a powerful hypnosis), are using the well-meaning Croat masses in order to turn them away from necessities of life, injecting their veins with poisonous frenzy, madness.[15]

Starčević's grand synthesis of the legal and political legacy of 'state rights' and the cultural claims based on alleged linguistic identity was not original. It was reminiscent of the Jacobin model elaborated in the aftermath of 1789, and replicated all over Europe (notably in Hungary) in the decades prior to 1848. It nevertheless secured Starčević's claim to local fame. He regarded the Party of Rights not as a mere competitor for office but as a movement that institutionalized the yearning for the Croatian nation's self-fulfilment. Its formal program was made public only in 1894 after it had adopted the 'trialist' model of Croatia's constitutional future within the Monarchy.



The Party of Rights peaked at the triannual election in 1884, with 24 seats in the Diet (*Sabor*) of 112 deputies. Its support was wider than a fifth of the seats would indicate, however. The restrictive electoral law,

[14] Giuseppe Praga, *A History of Dalmatia.* Giardini, 1993, p. 268.

[15] *Vreme*, Belgrade, January 30, 1938.

under which fewer than two percent of the inhabitants of Croatia-Slavonia were entitled to vote, excluded many members of the Rightist constituency among the urban lower middle class and Catholic peasantry in the former Military Border.

One of Starčević's successors turned his vehement anti-Serbism into a central tenet of his 'ideology' and a determining feature of his 'Croatness.' This was the leader of the Pure Party of Rights (Čista stranka prava) Josip Frank, who split from the Rightist mainstream shortly after Starčević's death. He was memorably described by Croatian writer August Šenoa as the "infamous political louse" that "degrades and befouls all that is Croatian, first to the benefit of the Magyars, and now of the Austrians."[16]

Born in Osijek (Slavonia), Frank (l.) was a German-speaking Jewish convert to Catholicism who became a Croat in his adulthood. He defined his adopted identity in strictly terms of a crude Serbophobia. Unlike Starčević, who was a fervent believer in what he preached, Frank was an opportunist and an avid Austrophile. He tied his brand of chauvinism to the black-and-yellow mast of Habsburg loyalism. His *Pure Party of Rights* was an instigator of periodic anti-Serb riots, notably in 1895, 1899 and 1902, and the sworn opponent of the Croat-Serb Coalition in subsequent years.

Frank's unyielding position on the Serb question eventually made the Party of Pure Rights marginalized. It was left with only one political partner, small at the time but destined to become strong and important later. The agreement on joint political action of the Croatian People's Peasant Party (HPSS) and the 'pure Rightists,' drafted by the HPSS leader Stjepan Radić in August 1909, stated that both parties were imbued with Croatian

[16] Miroslav Krleža, ed. "FRANK, Josip." *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*. Vol. III (1st ed.). Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1958, p. 387.

state law, "and will never depart from it even for the sake of the necessary and desirable popular accord with *that portion of our people who for various reasons call themselves Serbs*." [emphasis added].[17] Frank's escalating Austrianism turned the legacy of the *Father of the Nation* on its head. His acceptance of an *administrative*, rather than constitutional solution for the proposed Croatian unit within the Monarchy caused a split even within the Pure Rightist ranks in 1907.

Frank's activists took the lead in various clandestine smear campaigns and overt propaganda directed against prominent Serbs and Coalition politicians, notably during the 'High Treason' trials of 1908-1909. After Frank's death in 1911 the Frankists (*Frankovci*) came to denote virulent nationalism characteristic of the shopkeepers of Zagreb's Vlaška Street and students at the School of Law, often subsidized village boys from the poor Dinaric regions of Lika, Zagora, and western Herzegovina.[18] Their numbers were modest but their zeal knew no bounds. The resulting atmosphere was summed up by a Croat *Rightist* historian in the aftermath of anti-Hungarian demontrations and parallel anti-Serb riots that accompanied Emperor Francis Joseph's visit to Zagreb in 1895. "Nowhere in Europe is there more animosity between peoples of different tongues," he wrote, "than in this country between those who speak the same language":

> This animosity is lamentable but understandable. Croatian and Serbian ambitions are not leading them to fight each other arms in hand, for that would not be permitted by our present masters. Yet the struggle does exist, an under-handed, secret, dirty struggle … without an end. So that we Croats may have an independent statelet like the Serbs and

[17] See Bogdan Krizman, *Korespondencija Stjepana Radića, 1885-1918* (Zagreb, 1972), vol. I, p. 471.

[18] Their favorite slogan in anti-Serb demonstrations in Zagreb in 1902 reflected the mindset: *Udri, udri in der štat, Slavo-Srbom štrik za vrat!* (loosely, "Go, go, gung-ho, hang the Serb by the neck!")

live free from fear, there would have to be a war between Croats and Serbs, a war bound to be very popular.[19]

Starčević died only months after these lines were written. The continuity of his life's work was assured.

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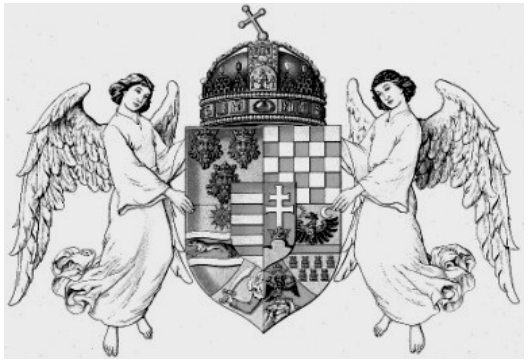

Coat of arms of the Kingdom of Hungary, with Croatia (upper right), Dalmatia (Austrian province, upper left), and Slavonia (lower left)

[19] Pero Gavranić, *Politička povjest hrvatskog naroda od prvog početka do danas*. Zagreb 1895, pp. 325-326.

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The Bloodbath

The Ustaša terror unleashed in the summer of 1941 was without precedent in the history of Southeastern Europe, a region known for its violent past. It was also, if only by a few weeks, the first attempted genocide in the Second World War. The goal of the Pavelić regime in making that attempt was not in doubt to its Axis mentors: "From the start the main Ustaša objective was to annihilate the Orthodox, to butcher hundreds of thousands of persons, women and children."[20] Some German sources saw this annihilation as the goal not limited to the Ustaša regime but shared by the non-Serb population at large: "There is no doubt at all that the Croats are endeavoring to destroy the entire Serb population."[21]

The application of the Ustaša program meant that, in the words of German historian Ernst Nolte, "Croatia became during the war a giant slaughterhouse." In late spring and summer of 1941 dozens of towns and villages throughout the NDH were subjected to a wave of terrorist operations. It was unprecedented, far bloodier than anything seen in the Balkans until that time. Hundreds of of thousands of Serbs, as well as tens of thousands of Jews and Gypsies, were murdered on the spot or led away to camps to be killed. As an officer and a gentleman of the old school, General Glaise von Horstenau was horrified by the 'barbaric' methods used against the Serbs. He noted the fact that they were "fundamentally placed outside the law, outlawed" (*vogelfrei*).[22] Even the hardened Nazis were shocked by what

[20] SS *Obergruppenführer* Arthur Phleps, *Tagesbuch*. Nr.Ia/545, 44 J.G.

[21] General Bader, quoted in Karl Hlinicka. *Das Ende auf dem Balkan 1944/45: Die Militärische Räumung Jugoslawiens durch die Deutsche Wehrmacht*. Goettingen: Musterscheudt, 1970, p. 187.

[22] Gert Fricke. *Kroatien 1941-1944: Die "Unabhängige Staat" in der Sicht des Deutschen Bevollmächtigen Generals in Agram, Glaise v. Horstenau*. Freiburg: Rombach Verlag, 1972, p. 39.

they witnessed: according to a Gestapo report prepared for Himmler, "The Ustašas committed their bestial crimes not only against males of military age, but especially against helpless old people, women and children."[23]

The number of victims will never be known; it is still a politically charged issue. Holocaust historians estimate that half a million, and perhaps as many as 530,000 Serbs were killed.[24] Yad Vashem center in Jerusalem quotes a similar figure:

> More than 500,000 Serbs were murdered in horribly sadistic ways (mostly in the summer of 1941), 250,000 were expelled, and another 200,000 were forced to convert to Catholicism… [S]ome 30,000 of Croatia's Jews died … 80 percent of the country's Jewish population.[25]

Given that, in April 1941, the Serbs constituted about one third of the total NDH population of six million, this level of casualties makes them the second hardest hit population in Hitler's Europe, right after the Jews.[26]

Estimates made by several high-ranking German and Italian officials during the war were even higher.

In a report to Heinrich Himmler, SS General Ernst Frick thus estimated that "600 to 700,000 victims were butchered in the Balkan fashion."[27]

Hitler's political envoy to the Balkans Hermann Neubacher was of the opinion that as many as 750,000 Serbs were killed.[28]

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[23] PA, Büro RAM, Kroatien, 1941-42, 442-449. IV/D/4.

[24] Jonathan Steinberg, "Types of Genocide: Croatians**,** Serbs, and Jews**,** 1941-1945," in David Cesarani, *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*. Routledge 1996, p. 175

[25] "Croatia," in *Shoah Resource Center*. Jerusalem: The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, 2005.

[26] For a demographic study using statistical methods of calculating demographic losses, see Bogoljub Kočović. *Žrtve drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*. Belgrade 2005.

[27] Hlinicka, op. cit. p. 292.

[28] Neubacher, op. cit..

General Lothar Rendulic, commanding German forces in the western Balkans in 1943-1944, estimated the number of Ustaša victims to be 500,000:

> When I objected to a high official who was close to Pavelić that, in spite of the accumulated hatred, I failed to comprehend the murder of half a million Orthodox, the answer I received was characteristic of the mentality that prevailed there: "Half a million, that's too much – there weren't more than 200,000!"[29]

The NDH needed no quasi-legislation for the slaughter to begin. With all power in the hands of Pavelić, and some 30,000 armed Ustaša volunteers at his disposal by June 1941, he and his henchmen on the ground felt they could do literally as they pleased. They would pick up a Serb village or town, as they did in Glina in August 1941, have it surrounded, order all inhabitants to gather in the local Orthodox church, tie them and kill them on the spot. They could throw them down a nearby karst pit – as they did at Golubinka near Medjugorje, in Herzegovina – or send them to a death camp such as Jadovno, which operated in June-August 1941. Throughout the summer of 1941 one of these scenarios was unfolding on daily basis. The method of killing, in the camps and villages alike, was typically a slit throat or a blow with a heavy club in the back of the head. More piquant methods, such as sawing off the head of the victim (l.), were too time consuming. The hardest hit areas were in Herzegovina and the Krajina.

[29] Lothar Rendulic. *Gekaempft, gesiegt, geschlagen*. Welsermühl Verlag, Wels und Heidelberg, 1952, p.161.

The Ustaša regime introduced the methods of terror and extermination soon adopted by the *Einsatzgruppen*: mobile detachments of hardened killers roamed the countryside, destroying entire communities regardless of age or gender solely on the basis of their ethnicity and religion. This parallel was not incidental. It reflected a key similarity between the Ustasa regime and the Nazis, their essential nihilism. Just as the military goals of Barbarossa were incidental to the objective of killing Jews and enslaving Slavs, so the enlistment of Croatia into the Nazi-sponsored New Europe was incidental to the Ustašas' central purpose: eliminating Serbs.

Terror and genocide were to be pursued even if this endangered vital state interests, e.g. by causing mass uprisings of Serbs or by fanning insurgency in previously peaceful areas. Far from helping the war effort the terror undermined it, but the Ustaša and Nazi leaders considered genocide *a fundamental duty* that transcended the victory in war itself.

The commitment to genocide as an existential good-in-itself distinguishes Hitler's and Pavelić's bloodbaths from other despotic regimes in history. Some Ustaša leaders freely acknowledged their priorities. In late 1942, shortly before he was removed from his post as the head of *Ravsigur*, Eugen-Dido Kvaternik told his old classmate, HSS activist Branko Pešelj, that he allowed for the possibility that Germany could lose the war and conceded the danger that in that case the NDH would cease to exist. However, he added, "regardless of the outcome of the war there will be no more Serbs in Croatia." This "reality of any post-war situation," Kvaternik said, would be a *fait accompli* for whoever turned out to be the victor.[30]

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[30] Branko Pešelj to the author, Washington D.C., May 12, 1988.

German and Italian Responses to the Slaughter

There were far fewer Wehrmacht troops in the German zone of the NDH than Italian forces in theirs, and their ability to document Ustaša behavior on the ground was accordingly more limited. By the end of June 1941, however, German field commands were well aware that a major bloodbath was under way. The first official report on "the increasing anti-Serb Ustaša terror" reached Berlin on 2 July 1941. Its author was Edmund Veesenmayer, the special representative of the German Foreign Ministry in Zagreb. He stated that "authoritative representatives of the regime" looked on the Serbs in Croatia as a problem "which is under the exclusive competence of Ustaša police and court-martials."[31]

General Edmund Glaise von Horstenau was the first high-ranking German in Croatia to realize that Pavelić wanted to kill or otherwise eliminate *all Serbs*. As soon as he arrived in Zagreb Glaise started developing an efficient intelligence network. It provided him with detailed information on Ustaša atrocities. Glaise's chief information gatherer was Captain Häffner, his assistant, who had lived in Zagreb for many years before the war, spoke the language fluently, and had good contacts throughout Croatia. His reports contained graphic eyewitness accounts of the slaughters. According to his tally, which was subsequently proved to be surprisingly accurate the number of Serbs "who have fallen as victims of animal instincts fanned by Ustaša leaders" exceeded 200,000 by early August 1941.[32] As the terror grew, so did Häffner's disdain for its perpetrators. He wrote of "the strong inferiority complex of Ustaša leaders and their flock vis-à-vis the Serbs, who are more numerous and superior in life energy."

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[31] PA, Büro Staatssekretär, Kroatien, Bd. 1, No. 290. Veesenmayer to the Foreign Ministry, 2 July 1941.

[32] Kazimirović, op. cit. pp. 112-117.

Glaise collected such reports in a special file and repeatedly raised the issue of atrocities with Pavelić, Slavko Kvaternik, and other NDH officials. As a decent officer of the old school he was horrified by what was going on. He was concerned that the Serbs would take up arm to defend themselves. He was especially alarmed to hear that the Germans were being blamed for Ustaša crimes. In a report dated 18 July 1941 Häffner warned Glaise that German troops were seen as being supportive of the regime's excesses:

> The Ustašas promote the impression that they act not only *in agreement* with German instances, but actually *on their orders*. There is a deep mistrust of Germany because it is supporting a regime that has no moral or political right to exist… [regime] of robbers who do more evil in one day than the Serbian regime had done in twenty years.[33]

In early July, Glaise took advantage of the temporary absence from Zagreb of the pro-Ustaša German minister, Siegfried Kasche, to raise alarm in Berlin. He found an ally in Heribert Troll-Obergfell, a former Austrian diplomat and counselor at the German legation in Zagreb. They alerted their superiors on two fronts. On 10 July 1941 Troll-Obergfell sent a report to the Foreign Ministry and warned that Ustaša crimes were creating "an explosive situation wherever Serbs lived," which could soon erupt into hotbeds of unrest which would be hard to quell.[34] On the same day Glaise sent his report to the High Command (OKW). He objected that "our troops have to be mute witnesses to such events… [which] does not reflect well on their otherwise high reputation":

> I am frequently told by our military, as well as by some Croat circles, that German troops would finally have to intervene against Ustaša crimes. … [But] even if we

[33] Häffner's report dated 18 July 1941, ibid. p. 113.

[34] PA, Büro Staatssekretär, Kroatien, Bd.1, No.307. 10 July 1941

> overlook that Croatia is an independent state, also that it is in the Italian sphere, our occupation forces – only six infantry battalions – are too weak to assume adequate police control. Ad hoc intervention in individual cases could make the German Army look responsible for countless crimes which it could not prevent in the past.[35]

Troll-Obergfell also spoke on 11 July to the newly appointed NDH foreign minister Mladen Lorković and raised the reports of Ustaša excesses. His statement was supported by photographs of massacred victims taken by German soldiers.[36] Troll demanded resolute measures to stop any "tendentious rumours" that anti-Serb actions were being carried out with German approval. These early reports tended to express concern about the effect Ustaša crimes would have on "the reputation of the German army and the Reich." German officers, whatever they knew or heard about mass murder in Russia, had a useful pragmatic argument which they used to the full. It was their job to secure occupied territories with as few troops and as little trouble as possible. The Ustaša were making this task impossible. The Germans knew that harmless civilians were subject to slaughter because they were *Serbs*, not because they lived in areas where resistance groups appeared to thrive – which would be considered by the Wehrmacht a legitimate cause for killing them:

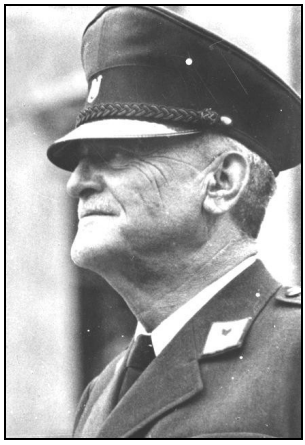
> Most Wehrmacht officers recognized that Ustaša violence emanated from a strategic framework different from the Wehrmacht's and therefore rejected Ustaša violence. The simplest form of recognition consisted in the realization that Serbs, however determined, were the main targets of Ustaša violence. Captain Konopatzki [714th Division intelligence officer] maintained that 'Serbs,' not Partisans, not Četniks, not enemies, were the object of Ustaša attacks. Major C.

[35] BA/MAF, No. 178/41 Glaise to OKW/Ausland, 10 July 1941.

[36] PA, Büro Staatssekretär, Kroatien, Bd. 1, No. 726, 11 July 1941.

> Geim, General Bader's intelligence officer, argued that the Ustaša attacked Serbs with the objective of "exterminating the Serbian portion of the population in Croatia."[37]

In contrast the Wehrmacht rarely targeted specific ethnic groups as part of anti-partisan operations in the NDH. In fact, some Wehrmacht units based in the NDH, such as the 714th Division, demanded from the troops "not to distinguish between members of different nationalities" when trying to determine who is the enemy.



Glaise raised the issue of atrocities with Pavelić's *Vojskovodja* ('Marshal') Slavko Kvaternik (r.) on several occasions during July. As a fellow veteran from the Habsburg army, Kvaternik appeared amenable to open discussion.[38] On one occasion Glaise told Kvaternik that "the Croat revolution was by far the bloodiest and most awful… in Europe since 1917."[39] On another Glaise convinced Kvaternik that they should go to Pavelić together and press on him the need to stop the slaughter of Serbs. Once they were with Pavelić, however, Kvaternik changed his tune completely and "talked in such radical tones" that Glaise grew irritated and commented "Dear Slavko, I am happy that you are at least letting me stay alive!" Pavelić listened politely to Glaise and did nothing.[40] He realized that he could afford to ignore Glaise's appeals for as long as Hitler supported 'intolerance.' With the one single but important exception of

[37] Jonathan Gumz, op. cit.

[38] Hungarian minister in Berlin Döme Sztojay described Kvaternik (whom he knew well in his younger years at the military academy) as *ein Mordskerl* – a common murderer. Cf. Hory and Broszat, op. cit. p. 75.

[39] BA/MAF, No. 207/41. Glaise's report to the OKW, 19 July 1941

[40] BA/MAF, No. 192/41. Glaise's telex to the OKW, 12 July 1941.

Siegfried Kasche, German officials in the NDH had no doubt that there was a link between the Ustaša crimes and the spreading Serb resistance. Legation Counselor Troll reported to the Foreign Ministry on August 10, 1941,

> Contrary to Croatian claims that responsibility for the rebellion is exclusively due to Serbian influences, the German military commands and sober Croatian circles are of the opinion that responsibility for the outbreak of rebellion is attributable to the uncontrollable and bloody acts of the Ustaša.[41]

Demands for intervention to stop Ustaša massacres soon started pouring in from many German quarters, including the Commander South-East Wilhelm List (l.) and the leaders of the *Volksdeutsche* community in Croatia.[42] Rudolf Epting, the Nazi Party *Auslandsorganisation* (foreign branch) chief in the NDH, shared their concern and, in a report to Hitler, named the Ustašas the main culprits.[43] Walter Schellenberg of the Reich Security Service (RSHA) foreign department also held that the slaughters caused the rebellion: "Without recruits from the Serb population which was terrorized by the Ustašas, this Četnik warfare would have been nipped in the bud."[44] The RSHA had an extensive network in the NDH and was thorough in its reports of Ustaša atrocities and the effect they had on the unrest. Its agents sent literally hundreds of such reports. The summary was presented to the Reichsfuehrer SS, Heinrich Himmler, in a detailed report: "Increased activity of the

[41] PA, Buro Staatssekretaer, Kroatien, Bd. 2, No. 24, 10 August 1941.

[42] Gert Fricke, op. cit. pp. 39-40.

[43] Hory and Broszat, op. cit. pp. 129-130.

[44] Ibid, p. 151.

bands is chiefly due to atrocities carried out by Ustaša units in Croatia against the Orthodox population."[45] According to Wehrmacht eyewitnesses, the Ustaša 'slaughtered' the villagers and 'plundered' their property in acts of pure terror.[46] German reports of Ustaša violence described it as "uncontrolled and transgressing all boundaries":

> The same terms, 'plundering,' 'excesses' and 'atrocities,' also described acts which Wehrmacht commanders explicitly prohibited their troops from participating in and therefore further reinforced the terms' criminal connotations when used in reference to Ustaša violence… as "in defiance of all the laws of civilization … A Wehrmacht regimental commander in Bosnia, Lt.Col. von Wedel, who commanded a regiment in *Kampfgruppe Westbosnien*, complained to Glaise of an Ustaša's company massacre of Serb women and children. According to von Wedel, the Ustaša killed them "like cattle" in a series of "bestial executions."[47]

General Walter Kuntze, commander of Wehrmacht forces in Southeastern Europe through August 1942, characterized the NDH as the 'problem child' of the region. His successor, General Alexander v. Löhr, also objected to the Ustaša bands' rekindling of unrest, which placed into serious question all the previous German efforts at pacification. The view was replicated down the command chain: Ustaša violence produced the 'general insecurity' and the 'renewal of bands' in areas of the country the Wehrmacht had 'mopped up.'[48] The intelligence staff of the commanding general in Serbia warned that the "boundless and undisciplined efforts of the Ustaša are the main reasons for the

[45] PA, Buero RAM, Kroatien, 1941-42, 442-449. IV/D/4 RSHA to Himmler, 17 February 1942

[46] 714. Division, Operations Staff, "Activity Report: Recent Fighting," NA, T-315, translated and quoted by Jonathan Gumz, op. cit.

[47] ibid.

[48] 714 Division, Operations Staff, T-315/2258/887.

further development of anarchic conditions."[49] Ustaša violence provided the Germans with a general explanation for the failure to subdue the insurgency in the Independent State of Croatia. They also applied deadly violence against the civilian population in their own areas of operation, but this was done in the name of military necessity.

The Italian approach was different. During the first Serb uprising, in eastern Herzegovina in June 1941, armed local groups made it clear to the Italians that their quarrel was only with the Ustašas. Serb village heads approached Italian garrisons to request food and protection.[50] As Italian units moved into the area of unrest to secure the lines of communication between the corps command at Dubrovnik and its hinterland, they stumbled upon horrendous scenes of carnage in the Serb villages of eastern Herzegovina (l.). At the same time they encountered no opposition from the insurgents. Both sides had a common interest: restoration of order and peace. If this objective demanded the removal of the cause of unrest – the Ustaša armed bands and the remnants of Pavelić's civil administration – the Italians had no qualms about doing it.

With considerable political and diplomatic skill Italian commanders proceeded to achieve their primary objective, overall pacification. General Dalmazzo, the commander of the Sixth Army Corps in the region of Dubrovnik, which included the rebellious eastern Herzegovina, asserted that the Ustašas and

[49] Kommandierender General und Befehlshaber in Serbien, Intelligence Staff, "Situation Report" quoted by J. Gumz (op. cit.)

[50] See e.g. reports by the Sixth Corps to 2. Army: T-821, roll 232, frame 78 (31 May 1941); frame 116 (9 June 1941) and frame 120 (11 June 1941).

local pro-Ustaša Muslims were guilty of causing the uprising. The Second Army headquarters gave him a free hand in restoring order.[51] The Italians disarmed the remaining Ustaša garrison in Trebinje and armed Serbs entered the town on 1 August 1941 without incident.[52] They undertook not to attack Italian troop movements by road or rail provided that transports carried no Croat soldiers or officials. The victims of Ustaša massacres were exhumed from mass graves and buried with proper Orthodox Church rites allowed once again by the Italians. Normality had returned, for the moment, at no cost in lives or treasure to the Italians. The model seemed well worth replicating elsewhere.

In the summer of 1941 Italian officers in the NDH faced a challenge more serious than their German counterparts. The slaughter on their side of the Demarcation Line was worse and the Serbs' reaction to it more violent. The German commanders, with few troops and no political orders, did not have much of a dilemma: Berlin denied them a free hand. Italian officers enjoyed greater autonomy of action. By acting in a conciliatory manner with non-Communist Serb insurgents, the Italians made less effective and plausible the Communist advocacy of total war against 'all enemies,' as instructed by their center in Moscow and the CPY leadership.

Pages 171-242 deliberately left out

[51] T-821. roll 232, frame 163. Sixth Corps to the 2. Army, 19 June 1941. Same roll, frame 279: Sixth Corps to the 2. Army Command, 10 July 1941.

[52] Cf. reports to that effect from the Sixth Corps to the 2. Army Command, eg. of 3, 10 and 18 August 1941. T-821, roll 232, frames 414, 454, 502.

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