

Expert Opinion: On the War Connections of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1991 – 1995)

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What was the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina? The answer of this question depends on the approach to the last war that has taken place in and around BiH. By that I am referring to the period of the historical defeat of communism, the period of 1991 – 1995, ie the crisis of Yugoslavia and the war instigated by the proponents of Greater Serbian expansion, but I am also referring to the still lasting period of post Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina as a direct consequence of the cessation of the war, and the incompleteness of the conflict concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Until the summer of 1990, Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the six republics of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), which differed from the others because its population consisted of three equal nations. It November 1943 Bosnia and Herzegovina was defined as “neither Serbian, nor Croatian, nor Muslim – but at the same time Serbian, and Croatian, and Muslim” with a complete equality of all the “Serbs, Muslims, and Croats”.¹ It was in that fashion that the solution of the national issue was proclaimed, and such Bosnia and Herzegovina existed from 1945 to 1990. The claim that the national issues had been solved was undisputable until mid-eighties, when the oppressive system displayed obvious signs of caving in. Towards the end of the eighties the intellectual representatives of all three nations claimed, for the purposes of daily politics, that they had been subjugated and downtrodden during SFRJ, which is an implausible statement. In the eve of the war such

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¹ The Resolution of the ZAVNOBIH (Land's Anti-Fascist Council of the People's liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) of 26 and 27 November 1943. The transcript in Kasim TRNKA, *Constitutionality of the Nations*. The Council of the Congress of the Bosnian Intellectuals, Sarajevo 2000., 145. In the ZAVNOBIH document, Serbs and Croats are treated as members of ethnic community, and muslims as religious community. The muslims of BiH were for the first time recorded as ethnic community in the census of 1971.

tendency was evident principally in the problem of World War II victims. This problem was presented as a suppressed chapter of the recent past.²

It is almost impossible to discuss the position and inter-relations of the three nations in the BiH. The person who does so, is denounced for spreading prejudices against other national groups and as an advocate of the nation it belongs to. So far, there have been no scientific studies of the Bosnia and Herzegovina during communism, ie they have only just begun to emerge and cover only particular periods in time and particular themes.³

A significant contribution is a recent study of the personnel management relationships, which is clearly indicative of a dominant position of Serbs, the second most numerous nation, in the political and administrative structures of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Less dominant was the position of Muslims and Croats were.⁴ The proportion is an obvious reflection of the power balance in the World War II, where the Serbs (holding the biggest percentage among the victorious partisans) inherited as the spoils of war, among other things, an oversized representation in the administrative structure of the republic after the war.

The relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were only established on equal footing in 1945, in the second Yugoslavia. Such a relationship had never existed before. Bosnia and Herzegovina, in its approximate contemporary shape, is a result of the border shifts of the Ottoman Empire with the Venetian Dalmatia and Vice-Royal Croatia, Serbian uprisings, European diplomats' agreements at the Congress of Berlin 1878, and the territorial exchanges between Montenegro and Herzegovina in 1947.

In 1878, BiH was entrusted as a protectorate to Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and formally and legally became its part in 1908. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918 – 1929), ie Yugoslavia (1929 – 1941), BiH did not exist in its contemporary shape due to the administrative division into banates. The Cvetković – Maček Agreement of 1939 brought about Banovina Hrvatska (the Banate of Croatia), which consisted of parts of Yugoslavia with majority of Croat population.⁵ In the period of the World War II the territorial

² The problem of the suffering of the Serbs in NDH (Independent State of Croatia in the World War II) was a permanent theme of Serbian "researchers" and a way to maintain national intolerance. For illustration, it will suffice to look up the bibliography of the works on Jasenovac for the period 1945 – 1990. in Jovan MIRKOVIĆ, *Published Sources and the Literature on Jasenovac Camps*, Laktaši: Grafomark, Banja Luka – Beograd, 2000. On the other hand, the problem of Muslim suffering was opened at the very end of the communism in a collection of documents on the suffering in the World War II: Vladimir DEDIJER, Antun MILETIĆ, *The Genocide against Muslims*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990. A shorter list of literature on that subject is presented by Smail ĆEKIĆ, *Aggression against Bosnia and Genocide against Bosnians 1991-1993*, NIPP Ljiljan, Sarajevo 1994., 9. Croatian sufferings had not become a public issue until after the collapse of the communism.

³ Husnija KAMBEROVIĆ, *Towards a Modern Society: Bosnia and Herzegovina 1945 – 1953*, Centre for Culture and Education, Tešanj, 2000.

⁴ Mirsad D. ABAZOVIĆ, *A Personnel War for BiH*, Association of Camp Prisoners of BiH, Sarajevo, 1999.

⁵ "In accordance with that Agreement, the autonomous Banovina Hrvatska was established,

perimeter of Banovina Hrvatska (1939 – 1941) was expanded, under the name of Independent State of Croatia (NDH) to the border of Serbia, or, in layman's terms, to the river Drina. Upon the end of the World War II, the borders were drawn back, with minor corrections, to correspond with the relations in the time of Austro-Hungarian monarchy, ie to the front line of lengthy Austro – Turkish wars. The only alteration occurred in 1947, when the government of the People's Republic of BiH relinquished the Turkish Sutorina (Herceg Novi) to People's Republic of Montenegro in exchange for Maglić (Vučurevo and Kreševo) in Eastern Bosnia.⁶

After 45 years of the communist one-party system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 18 November 1990, the first democratic, multi-party elections were held.⁷ National parties, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and The Party of Democratic Action (SDA) won overwhelmingly.⁸

HDZ was the name of the party that had won elections in Republic of Croatia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina its very name was the key to its success among local Croats. The inaugural assembly of the party was held on 18 August 1990 in Sarajevo.⁹ It advocated confederation and co-existence on equal footing of the three constitutional nations.¹⁰

Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), the party of Bosnian Serbs had the same name as the part of Serb minority in Croatia. Still, SDS in Bosnia had much stronger backing and bigger ideological value. As opposed to HDZ, the aim of SDS party was a "federative Yugoslavia" and Bosnia and Herzegovina as its equal element.¹¹ Like its Croatian namesake, SDS in Bosnia was a part of the integral Serbian movement with the centre in Belgrade. It also wanted to merge with the parent nation in Serbia. With respect to Croatia, it was a connective tissue between Serbia proper and the Serbs in Croatia.

which planted the seed of federalism, but also introduced less pleasant territorial divisions (Banovina Hrvatska got parts of Bosna and Herzegovina, while the rest of the country was left to the direct government of Belgrade)." writes Ivo BANAC, *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, Durieux, Zagreb, 2001. Banac's thinking is defined by current daily political reasons, as how otherwise can one explain the claim of the opening of the territorial divisions of BiH in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, when BiH ceased to exist in its current shape in 1922.

⁶ Josip LUČIĆ – Stijepo OBAD, *Isthmus of Konavli*, Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik branch of Matica Hrvatska, 1994; Stijepo OBAD, *The Southern Border of Croatia Was Stable for Almost 600 years*, Dubrovnik Herald, No: 2327, 2.9.1995, 4-5.

⁷ Zoran TOMIĆ – Nevenko HERCEG, *The Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, The University of Mostar, Centre for Studies in Journalism, Mostar, 1998, 65.

⁸ Alija Izetbegović accurately observed that the elections were "practically a census". Alija IZETEGOVIĆ, *Memories: Autobiographical Notes*, Šahinpašić, Sarajevo, 2001, 85.

⁹ The first president of HDZ was Davor Perinović, who was replaced by Stjepan Kljuić in the September of the same year. *Parties, programmes, personal figures*, Elections '90, Oslobođenje, October 1990, 35.

¹⁰ *Parties, programmes, personal figures*, Elections '90, Oslobođenje, October 1990, 66–67.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 74.

The third, most numerous constitutional nation in BiH, Muslims (referred to as Bosniaks from 1994 on), was led by the Party of Democratic Action under the leadership of Alija Izetbegović. The party exhibited an intention to exist as the party of all Yugoslav Muslims (apart from BiH, there were Muslims in Serbia and Montenegro). It advocated the preservation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a common state of Muslims, Serbs and Croats, but with its “gaze fixed upon other regions of the country where Muslims live”.¹²

“Since none of the parties won majority, a co-habitation of a sort was established, ie the partnerships of the victorious national parties. There could be no talk of the coalition of these parties, as their programmatic agendas regarding the greater number of most important issue were different, even in opposition”.¹³ With their first appearance on the historical scene, the national parties declared that they cannot find a common ground in their views upon the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is hardly surprising, and inability to agree continued in the past and in the present period.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the war in Croatia (1990 – 1991)

In the summer of 1991 the open aggression of Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) against the Republic of Croatia began. By the end of September Bosnia and Herzegovina was also involved in it.¹⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be excluded from the war in Croatia, although in broader (especially intellectual and journalist) circles the accepted claim is that the war in BiH began in Sarajevo in the April of 1992.¹⁵ BiH participated in war in Croatia by means of the territory and the engagement of a part of its military fit population. As a territory, BiH was an area from which Croatia was intensively attacked from the September of 1991 onwards, with the purpose of completion of the project of Greater Serbia. In the JNA plans for the offensive operation against Croatia, BiH had a central role. Its area was a starting point of the three operational directions: Banja Luka – Gradiška – Virovitica, Bihac – Karlovac – Zagreb and Mostar – Split. Its territory also served as a hinterland for JNA attacks on the Knin – Zadar direction.¹⁶ The JNA planned to concentrate in the western Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other regions, apart from the parts with the distinct Croat majority (western Herzegovina) were used for transport and logistical support of their aggression against the Republic of Croatia.

The human resources which took part in the war in Croatia can be divided on Serbs and Croats. The Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina perceived the attack on Croatia as aggression against Croats in general, they considered

¹² Ibid, 75.

¹³ K. TRNKA, 2000., 26.

¹⁴ Until the summer of 1991 JNA had three corps of the ground troops; Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Tuzla corps as part of the Belgrade (1st) military district.

¹⁵ “Do you remember Sarajevo?”, *Dani* (Sarajevo), 5.4.2002. Thematic issue with the list of the defenders and civilians killed in the course of the siege of the city.

¹⁶ Veljko KADIJEVIĆ, *My view on the disintegration*, Politika, Beograd 1993, 135–136.

themselves as an integral part of Croatian nation, and they were partly drawn into the war by the JNA war plans. Croats perceived Serbs as the aggressor, regardless of the republic boundaries within Yugoslavia. It was the same for the Serbs: for them it was a war against Croats.

The number of Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina who participated in the war in Croatia in Croatian units is yet to be established, but it would appear not to be a huge number. However, those BiH Croats were volunteers, which makes their participation significantly greater, because as a rule their combat value is higher than that of drafted/reserve servicemen. BiH Croats fought in the formations of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs (MUP), the National Guard Corps (ZNG), Croatian Army (HV) and Croatian Defence Forces (HOS), in the territory of the Republic of Croatia. It should not escape our notice that, forced by the circumstances, there were also Croats from BiH who fought against Croatian armed forces, due to their obligatory military service in JNA.

The proportion of the Serbs from BiH in the war in Croatia was considerably greater than that of Croats. They mostly took part in the actions on the Western Bosnia (Krajina) – Western Slavonija direction. As reservists they were included in units of the JNA Banja Luka corps. In the peace time organization, Banja Luka corps was a second line formation. Only its 329. armoured brigade had “A” classification. In the peace-time organization, the formation of Banja Luka corps numbered 2070 soldiers,¹⁷ only to grow up to 30.000 members of war formation upon mobilisation, not including the partisan division from the region of Slavonija.¹⁸ From September 1991 to June 1992, the corps fought in the territory of Croatia, near Novska, Pakrac, Lipik and Nova Gradiška.¹⁹

In the region of Eastern Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serb reserve fought within 472. motorized brigade of the Naval military district in the broader area of Dubrovnik, and partly within the newly arrived formations of the Titograd corps of JNA. The conduct of the Territorial Defence of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina is not clear at this level of research. However, at least two brigades from the area of Bosnian Krajina, 2nd infantry (or partisan) from Banja Luka²⁰ and 5th partisan “Kozarska” from Prijedor²¹, fought in the

¹⁷ The command of 30. partisan division, Strictly Confidential, No: 651-9 of 23.9.1991., The conclusions of the mobilisation evaluation of the 5th corps (extract on the 30th partisan division).

¹⁸ Number of soldiers under arms calculated on the basis of the congeneric formations in the 5th military districts.

¹⁹ Summarising the combat actions in Croatia, the Command of Banja Luka corps, in their letter to their members, pointed out: “In their eight month long combat, the fighters of the 5th corps have saved the Serb people of Western Slavonia from the extinction on the hands of ustasas, liberated and captured Serb territories in this part of Croatia, prevented the penetration of the Paraga’s warriors into the territory of Bosanska Krajina, and have been creating preconditions for the arrival of the peace keeping forces of the UN, which should mean the cessation of war in these regions”. Command of the 5th corps., Confidential, No: 321-1 of 3.4.1992, to the Command of the 30 pd, Letter to the fighters of Banja Luka corps.

²⁰ POA: Command 2. pgr, Confidential. No: 03-383/91 of 15.11.1991, Conveyance.

²¹ “The flag of the country which is not”, *Krajina Soldier*, No. 39/40, June 1995. 38-39.

region of Western Slavonija as a part of Banja Luka corps.²² For their service, the members of Territorial defence of BiH received wages from the budget of another state, the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina.²³ Is it not consistent, then, to state that BiH committed aggression against the Republic of Croatia?

Political leadership and greater part of Muslims tried to distance themselves from the conflict, in line with the well known statement of the president of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović, of 6 October 1991, that “it is not our war”²⁴ The statement has been interpreted in different ways. Izetbegović utters it as a president of the SR BiH presidency, but also as a party leader of the Muslims. That is an attempt of non-interference in the conflict perceived as a Croats and Serbs’ war. When we view that attempt in the context of the real circumstances in the field, in the republic which is partly at war, it is clear that it is a party statement, as it is only the party (SDA and the Muslims) that is not involved in the conflict. The other two constitutional nations, especially the Croats, rightfully perceive the war as fateful. However, a part of Muslims participates in the war on both sides, as draftees doing obligatory military service, officers in the armed forces of SFRJ, and members of the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia.²⁵ The war in Croatia deepened the national differences of the three fundamental nations starting from the first multi-party elections held a year prior to that.

What position to assume as regards this fact? Is Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina an aggressor as far as the Republic of Croatia is concerned? One constitutional nation (Serbs) performs aggression against another state, the other constitutional nation (Croats) participate in that war in the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia. Or, more precisely, Croats participate in the defence from an aggression, and partly, in the south of Croatia and western Herzegovina, they are practically in defence against the reserve forces of JNA under the command of Užice corps, which had arrived in Mostar in the second half of September for the purpose of co-ordinating the engagement as planned by the General Headquarters of the armed forces of SFRJ.²⁶ Their task, as testified by general Kadijević, was to advance in the direction Mostar-Split. This plan

²² Stjepan ŠIBER, *Deceits, Fallacies, Truth: War Log 1992*, Rabic, Sarajevo, 2000., 15-25. In depicting the events up to the April 1992, Šiber’s book is an attempt to cleanse his personal past from the period in which the armed forces of which he was in top command structures fought in the Republic of Croatia against the people he personally ethnically belonged to.

²³ Hasan EFENDIĆ, *Who defended Bosnia*, The Association of BiH Citizens of Aristocratic Origin, Sarajevo, 1998, 237.

²⁴ A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 95.

²⁵ “At the time of fighting in Slovenia and Croatia, the Serbs from BiH massively responded to mobilisation into JNA units, which was not the case with Croats and muslims from that republic” writes Stanko NIŠIĆ, *The Strategy of Serbs*, IKP “Nikola Pašić”, Belgrade 1995., 53; Mesud Šabanović, a retired officer of Croatian Army claims that 30.000 Bosniaks participated in Croatian liberation war. Thirty thousand Bosniaks fought in Croatian liberation war, and 1.696 were killed, but now they are marginalized and rejected”, *Globus* (Zagreb), 23.3.2001., 59.

²⁶ “Within the framework of creating the Greater Serbia the “Red” has deployed considerable forces of Užice corps in the region of Herzegovina, and especially in the area of the Municipality of Mostar, which can be considered temporarily captured” was an estimate of the Territorial

failed because only one third of the planned forces was built up. That is why the task was altered into securing the airport of Mostar and “forming operational basis for potential engagements towards Split acting jointly with the forces of Knin group and the Navy”.²⁷ It was in that very area that Croat village of Ravno together with a part of its population was destroyed in the JNA attack.²⁸ The territory of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina played, as far as Croatia is concerned, a hostile role in providing an operational basis from which a significant portion of JNA engagement against Croatia was launched.²⁹ Little weight is attributed to this fact, more precisely, it is either ignored or not understood.³⁰

Another, more important, relation is visible when we put BiH in the correlation with the Serbian war objective, which JNA intensively attempted to effect in the period from the September 1991 to January 1992. Provided the success is achieved in pursuing that objective in the Republic of Croatia, there was likelihood of resolving the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Greater-Serbian project. Does that success mean the second quiet fall of Bosnia? It does, in my opinion. I am also convinced that the neutrality of the Muslims in the Serbian aggression against the Republic of Croatia was not non-partisan, but a pro-Yugoslav³¹ neutrality at the time when Yugoslavia was disintegrating in all its parts.³² For the sake of the smallest constitutional nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Croats) and romanticised views on Muslims widely held in Croatia, the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not receive its accurate qualification, that of an aggressor against the Republic of Croatia, which it *de facto* was.

defence (TO) of Čapljina towards the end of 1991. The Municipal headquarters of the TO Čapljina of 17.11.1991., The order for the defence of the Municipality of Čapljina.

²⁷ V. KADIJEVIĆ, 1993, 135, 139, 140.

²⁸ S. ČEKIĆ, 1994., 171.; In the opinion of Stjepan Kljujić “Bosnia perished at that particular moment when the invasion was launched against the Croat village of Ravno in Herzegovina, and when nobody in BiH showed solidarity with the victims. It was considered to be a Croat issue in Bosnia. As if they were not to be attacked by Milošević later on.” Stjepan KLJUJIĆ, *Bosnia and Herzegovina Today*, Europe and nationalism, Durieux, Zagreb, 2000, 127.

²⁹ A good example is Zvonimir Lerotić’s answer to the authors of the open letter to the president of Republic of Croatia of 6 January 1992. The letter was published in *Vjesnik* of 14 January 1992. The text of the letter in Ivan LOVRENOVIĆ, *Bosnia, the End of Century*, Durieux, Zagreb, 1996., 159.

³⁰ The example are the authors of the open letter of 6 and 22 January 1992. Ibid, 157–158., 163–166.

³¹ “Bosnia cannot survive the death of Yugoslavia” said Alija Izetbegović to Warren Zimmerman, American ambassador in Yugoslavia, after the elections, and “If Yugoslavia disintegrates and Bosnia becomes independent, it will be torn into pieces. Milošević and Tuđman already demand loyalty from the Serbs and Croats whose families have lived in Bosnia for centuries. I know that the United States want to preserve Yugoslavia, and there is no better reason for that than to prevent the war in Bosnia.” Warren ZIMMERMAN, *The Sources of a Catastrophe*, Globus, Znanje, Zagreb 1997, 142–143.

³² In the February of 1991, while explicating to the media a proclamation of his party, A. Izetbegović expressed the opinion that the destiny of Bosnia and Hercegovina is more determined by Serbian-Muslim, rather than Croato-Muslim relations, principally due to numbers of the populations. A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 86. In the same year, reflecting upon the position

The failure of JNA in the Republic of Croatia, and then the defusing of the war provoked a radical change in Serbian plans. The presence of JNA in Bosnia and Herzegovina had for the second time in a very short period increased (first time in July/August with parts of Maribor corps) by withdrawal of the Rijeka corps to eastern Herzegovina, and a part of Zagreb corps into the broader area of Bihać, and its armoured-mechanized formations moved to Tuzla and Sarajevo and became part of Tuzla and Sarajevo corps in late 1991. In the first months of 1992 after the arrival of UNPROFOR in Croatia the preparations were in progress for withdrawing parts of Zagreb (ie Bihać) and Knin corps to the Serb ethnic regions in Bosnian Krajina.

If we understand Bosnia and Herzegovina as an area that functioned on the today's territorial levels, and that is the time 1878 – 1918 or 1922., and 1945 – 1991, we can conclude that it survived on the basis of a special status. It is significant that that status, ie the guarantor of its viability (indivisibility), is, as a rule, always outside the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy it was under jurisdiction of common ministries, and in the socialist Yugoslavia it was maintained on the opposition between the Croat and the Serb issues, which were, towards the end of the existence of that state, actively joined by the Muslim issue.³³ At the end of the eighties, the “guarantor's balance”, which held Bosnia and Herzegovina together, began to be disturbed, and in the late summer of 1991 it ceased to exist. The peripheral parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the domination of one of the constitutional nations, practically merge with parts of Croatia (or rebelled parts of Croatian Krajina). Western Herzegovina with the areas of Livno and Tomislavgrad literally gets the ethnic border towards the Serb areas (the exception being the politically undefined area of Kupres), which was to start functioning, from the April 1992, as a front line, ie the line of separation. The reason is simple: non-existence of the central government, and a complete ethnical division with a pronounced vacillation on the part of the Muslims

of Croats and Slovenes that they do not want to live with Yugoslavia, Dr. Maid Hadžiomerađić, one of SDA founders, wrote: Such a contemptuous declaration – we do not want to live with Yugoslavia – sounds very demeaning and arrogant, apart from being an ingratitude towards the nations. Both Slovene and Croatian economies have earned well on these nations. The nations of Yugoslavia have never military attacked, nor seized either Slovenia or Croatia (so their pointing of the Vice-Roy Jelačić's sabre towards us now is a result of mere chauvinism and madness). Luckily, the people from Knin have come along and heated up their seats, so the lads cooled down from that insane idea, and then Slovenes deflated gradually as well” Seid HADŽIOMEROVIĆ, *The Party of Democratic Action and the Reality*, Sarajevo 1991, 240.

³³ “For the purposes of creating an anti-hegemonic coalition, Tito insisted on strengthening the so called Yugoslav political periphery – supporting the sovereignty and autonomy of BiH, Macedonia, Kosovo, Vojvodina, even Monte Negro, in order to reach a certain balance and symmetry with respect to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. He demanded that BiH should behave as autonomously as possible as a buffer republic between Serbia and Croatia, ... by often visiting BiH, Tito “always encouraged its leadership, telling them “do not yield either to Belgrade, or to Zagreb”. Ever since the mid-sixties... BiH itself started towards the emancipation from the federal administration in three important aspects: proclamation of Muslims as a nation, decreasing the repression against Croats, and constraining the Greater-Serbian forces”. Dušan BILANDŽIĆ, *Croatian Modern History*, Golden marketing, Zagreb 1999, 577–578.

with respect to the politics of the party leadership. It was that vacillation and the hesitance to assume a clear point of view with respect to the war in BiH, ie to JNA, that had disastrous effects on a part of Muslim population, especially in Bosnian Krajina, north-eastern and eastern Bosnia.

Republican traits on the parts of Croats in that area were gradually to become articulated in the summer of 1992, as an effect of the recognition of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the positions that Croats reached during the war with Serbs were maintained. The control was kept over the territory in which they were the majority, and which was seized during the fighting with the Serbs.

What is BiH towards the end of 1991 and in the beginning of 1992?

The war in Croatia reached a stalemate in the end of 1991. The offensive operation of the armed forces of SFRJ had failed, it had stopped at the borders of the regions with a majority of Serb population, with partial successes in Eastern Slavonia (Baranja and Vukovar) and Dalmatia (broader area of Dubrovnik, Zadar and Šibenik). The principal issue for JNA then was its attitude towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a consequence of the failure in Croatia. The same approach was exercised by the formally first man of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The top political leadership of BiH perceived the army as an independent factor, not as the armed advance contingent of Greater-Serbian politics. In the meeting with the leadership of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, held on 24 December 1991, the federal secretary of people's defence, army general Veljko Kadijević, requested the disarmament of all the paramilitary formations, and fulfilment of all the obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the army.³⁴ From the same period dates the estimate of the Federal Secretariat of the People's Defence on the circumstances in the Territorial defence of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the multy-party system prevailed, and after the distribution of government according to the national principle. HDZ was considered an exponent of a policy which "neither wants, nor wishes to stay in any Yugoslavia, but exclusively within the independent NDH, thus objectively disintegrating BiH, although it declaratively advocates the independent and sovereign BiH". The conduct of SDS was evaluated pursuant with the global interests of Serbian nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to live in one state, so their position with respect to TO was compatible with that, although the party was organizing its illegal defence system. SDA was put in the same camp with HDZ, with the remark that their attitude "towards the army and TO was... more moderate compared to that of HDZ, but is, in essence, merely opportunistic and contained in the intent not to create resentment, due to the fact that JNA forces grouped in large numbers in the territory of the Republic." It was concluded that SDA was illegally arming their members, and "through the formations of the

³⁴ The command of the 2nd military district of 21.1.1992, to the command of the 10th corps, a note from the talk of the federal secretary of people's defence, army general Veljko Kadijević at the meeting with the leadership of the SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in Sarajevo on 24 December 1992.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) it endeavours to transform the TO into the army of the republic³⁵. In the course of further surveillance of the armament of the national parties, JNA concluded in the first half of March that SDA was creating a military organization through Patriotic League and Muslim Youth Union. HDZ and HSP did the same.³⁶

Despite the statements of the Croatian president of the end of 1991, and the meetings with the representatives of HDZ BiH, the BiH Croats participated in the referendum for the sovereign and independent Bosnia and Herzegovina of 29 February and 1 March 1992. There was a 64,31% turnout of registered voters, of which 99,44 voted affirmatively. The referendum was one of the fundamentals on which the European Union recognized, with its members, the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent and sovereign state in its existing borders.³⁷

Political dissolution of BiH

The war events of 1992 had a political forplay in 1991. After the party differences with their political partners, on 24 October 1991, the BiH Serbs start the disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina by founding the Assembly of the Serb People in Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁸

Based on the referendum of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 9 and 10 October 1991, Serbian autonomous districts were verified and proclaimed on 21 October 1991.³⁹ The next step was the Decision on Constituting the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina of 21 December 1991, which was enacted on 9 January 1992.⁴⁰ The process of repositioning of the central governmental organs of the republic in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina where Serbs were in majority onto Serb national level was thus brought to completion. The final part was to be done by 2nd military

³⁵ The command of the 2nd military district of 21.1.1992, to the command of the 10th corps, The Circumstances and Problems in TO BiH.

³⁶ The Command of the 2nd military district fo 21.1.1992, to the command of 530 PoB, The Information on the situation in BiH. The data on the armament of SDS were not given, which was the end of the self-proclaimed policy of equidistance towards the "paramilitary" groups, as the arming of SDS was in progress at that very moment. The Command of 2. VO, Confidential., NOL 16/28-3 of 2.3.1992. to the Command of lad PVO/46. pOB, the delivery of automatic rifle AP 7,62mm. Facsimile of the order in S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 366.

³⁷ K. TRNKA, 2000, 29.

³⁸ The decision on founding the Assembly of the Serb People in Bosnia and Herzegovina of 24.10.1991, S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 270-272.

³⁹ The decision on the verification of the proclaimed Serb Autonomous Districts in Bosnia and Herzegovina of 21.11.1991., S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 275-276.: On the same day the Assembly of the Serbian People in BiH recognized the Republic of Serbian Krajina "as a federal unit of Yugoslavia". The decision of the Assembly of Serbian People of BiH to recognize the Republic of Serb Krajina of 21.11.1991, Ibid, 277.

⁴⁰ The Decision of the Assembly of Serbian People to take measures towards forming the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 21.12.1991., S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 30, 278.

district of JNA, ie its follower, the Army of the Serbian republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina from April to June 1992.

Along with the Serbs, the BiH Croats also displayed the need to organize themselves in the state which was daily becoming less and less of a state. At the meeting of the presidents of crisis headquarters of the Herzegovina and Travnik regional community in Grude on 12 November 1991, the conclusion was reached that “the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have finally started leading an active and determined policy which should lead to the realisation of a centuries-old dream, a common Croatian state.” The conclusion spoke of the strategy of the BH Croats which was “founding the Sovereign Croatia in its ethnic and historical (now feasible) borders”,⁴¹ because of which the “Decision on Founding the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna” was made six days later, deciding that the “Community will...respect the democratically elected government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina for as long as exists the state independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to the former, or any other, Yugoslavia”.⁴² The process of organising the defence had a support from Croatia principally due to the difficult and uncertain situation in which the Republic of Croatia was at the time.

Territorial shape of Bosnia and Herzegovina

How to establish the relation between the state sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the right of its peoples to self-determination, is a question on which the discussions started in 1991, in mid October.⁴³ The Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed, on 14 October 1991, the Memorandum (letter of intent) and the Platform on the Position of BH with a view that “Bosnia and Herzegovina is a democratic sovereign state, and it is not prepared to accept any constitutional resolution of the future Yugoslav union which would fail to include simultaneously both Serbia and Croatia”.⁴⁴ As far as Croats were concerned, that was already an anachronism. Yugoslavia was disintegrating, and BH was a Yugoslavia on a smaller scale. From the mili-

⁴¹ Conclusions from the joint meeting of the Hercegovina regional community and Travnik regional community of 12.11.1991., S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 309-309. The author interprets the Conclusions as a decision of the “so called Hercegovina regional community” and so called “Travnik regional community” on forming a “Croatian State”, which is a distortion of the term. Having in mind the time in which the book was written, the interpretation is a reflection of the views on the genesis of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna.

⁴² The decision on establishing the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna of 18.11.1991. (abridged text) *People's Buletin of HZ Herceg-Bosna*, September 1992, 2-3; S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 310-311. As in the previous case, the author interprets the document uncritically as a decision of “Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina on proclamation of the “Croatian State” in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. The transcript of the Decision published in K. Rotim is for the most part identical in the first six articles, while others differ, and in S. ČEKIĆ, the conclusive provisions are missing too. Karlo ROTIM, *The Defence of Herceg-Bosnia*, Široki Brijeg 1997, book 1, 518 -519.

⁴³ “Negotiations of the Territorial Exchanges”, *Dani* (Sarajevo), September 1998, special edition, 74-82.

⁴⁴ K. TRNKA, 2000, 27.

tary point of view, the Muslims still were neither enemies, nor allies for Croats and Serbs. On the political level, the mutual relations (enemies) were clearer. Such relations existed until the April of 1992, when the new page of BH history was turned.

The arguments and negotiations about the future constitution of Bosna and Hercegovina started on international level in the February of 1992 in Lisbon, where it was agreed that BH stays within its borders, and that future constitution of BH would be based on the several entities (constitutional units). A continuation of the talks was arranged, with the mediation of the European Community. SDA advocated a unitary BH "the essence of which is in the existence of the single central authorities and possible local self-government in the constitutional parts of the Republic". HDZ was for the federalisation of BH, and SDS for confederate BH.⁴⁵

From then on, the International community in its mediation perceives Bosnia and Hezegovina as a complex state in the recognized state borders. Proposed peaceful solutions were rejected after fighting on the ground.

Until the August 1992 the plan of the Portuguese diplomat Cutillero failed. He proposed constitutional units the forming of which would be governed by the national principle. After that, with the trumpets of war, Vance-Owen plan followed, which envisaged the forming of ten provinces "based on geographical, economical and other criteria, at which the names of the provinces cannot indicate the national features".⁴⁶ The starting position of the plan is the situation on the ground. It seems that Croats and Serbs were satisfied with the territories they controlled. The region of central Bosnia, where there were mixed units of the operational HVO zone Central Bosnia and of the 3rd corps of the BH army, was supposed to be resolved by means of division into provinces. Convinced that the end of war is at hand, General Headquarters of HVO took measures in the first days of January to fulfil "the obligation ensuing from the Geneva conference", and requested from its subordinates the records of mine fields and estimates of the human resources needed for the "control of the lines reached"⁴⁷ On their part, the National Assembly of Republic of Srpska passed, on 17 December 1992, the Declaration of the cessation of war, in which it is concluded, among the rest, that "ethnic and religious war in the former BH is finished as far as Republic of Serbska is concerned, and that Serbian people have successfully defended its independent and sovereign state – the Republic of Srpska."⁴⁸ The Army raised the level of combat readiness of the formations, suggesting that "offensive actions

⁴⁵ The Command of 2nd military district, Confidential. No: 25/142-551 of 12.3.1992, to the command of 530 PoB. Information on the situation in BH.

⁴⁶ K. TRNKA, 2000, 33-34.

⁴⁷ GHQ HVO, No: 01-10/93 of 8.1.1993, to the commanders OZ, Command, GHQ HVO, No: 01-57/93 of 13.1.1993., OZ JI/H, Request.

⁴⁸ "The passing of the Declaration of the cessation of the war does not mean that the war is finished, but expresses the readiness of the Serb people" it is said further in the Information, "but whether, and when, it will be finished depends on the readiness of the Muslim-Croat coalition and the aggressor army of the Republic of Croatia to let the war be finished". GHQ VRS, Confidential, No: 17/11-75 of 23.12.1992, Information.

should be taken wherever possible, as every military success is a great contribution towards the military and political victory over the aggressor.⁴⁹

After the Vance - Owen plan had failed, there followed Owen - Stoltenberg plan, also an unsuccessful one, which envisaged Bosnia and Herzegovina as a union of the three national republics. The involvement of the United States of America in the peace negotiations led to the cessation of Bosniak-Croat conflict and signing of Washington agreement on 18 March 1994.⁵⁰

The defence efforts

The time leading up to the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterized by the preparations of the parties for the war. The intensity of those preparations is not the same, principally for the reason that the initial stage was different. The very armament race was a significant reflection of the crisis of the inter-ethnic relations on a broader plane. All three constitutional nations were armed secretly and separately. On the same principle and organisation SDS was in the lead, as it was supplied the arms by the Serb dominated JNA.⁵¹

Organized by the Croatian Democratic Union, the Croats also get arms, although in much smaller quantities than Serbs, but sufficient to reduce the sense of inferiority after JNA had disarmed the Territorial defence.

The circumstances are the worst at Muslims', due to the gap between the political elite and the people, although the first steps in that directions had been made fairly early on. Patriotic league was founded in the spring of 1991⁵² as a party paramilitary formation.⁵³ After that, in the Police House in Sarajevo, on 10 June 1991, at the meeting of leading Bosniak public persons from the whole of Yugoslavia,⁵⁴ The Council of the National Defence

⁴⁹ The command of 4th corps, Djelov. No 02-107/93 of 6.1.1993, to the commands of all the units. Taking measures of full combat readiness, Warning.

⁵⁰ K. TRNKIĆ, 2000, 33-41.

⁵¹ Extensively on this: S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 168-200.

⁵² Patriotic league was allegedly founded on 1 March 1991 in Sarajevo. The first troops review was on 16 June of the same year in the surroundings of Sokolac. *Expert lexicon of the basic military and combat, legal and political terms*, The Administration for Political Issues of the BH Army, Sarajevo 1996, 166-167; According to the chronology of the collected of works on the war in Croatia and BH from Budapest 1999, the members of the military-political wing of Patriotic league had, in the May of 1991, the first meeting on the mountain of Trebević. *The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 1999, 378.

⁵³ R. Mahmutčehajić disputes that "Patriotic league...was shaped in such a way as to allow someone to say today - there, they formed a paramilitary organization before the war". "When I told Izetbegović and Čengić that we should prepare for defence, they listened with contempt. This is why Izetbegović nowadays does not care much for talking about Patriotic league". Free Bosnia, (Sarajevo), 9.3.2000. 32; The position is implausible after reading Patriotic league HQ's Directive for defence of the sovereignty of 25 February 1992. S. HALILOVIĆ, 1998, 222-223.

⁵⁴ Izetbegović does not mention that, saying those were only the representatives from BH. A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 95.

of Muslim People was formed under the auspices of SDA, with PL as their military wing.⁵⁵

At the military counselling of the Patriotic League in the village of Mehurići near Travnik, which was held 7-8 February 1992, it was concluded that they have 60 to 70 thousand of armed members.⁵⁶ By the end of February “Directive for the defence of the sovereignty” was passed and accepted, from which it is clear that Patriotic league by disintegrative forces in BH means SDS with JNA and the extremist wing of HDZ.⁵⁷ According to the Directive, the main task was supposed to be “the protection of muslim people, preservation of the territorial integrity of BH, in order to secure the future co-existence of all the peoples and nationalities in the state territory of BH.” In count 3, the “people of Sandžak, Kosovo and Macedonia are invited to act in solidarity with our righteous struggle, and start immediate combat actions with the purpose of engaging enemy forces and weakening its combat power in the territory of BH. Simultaneously, the contact, co-operation and co-ordination should be established in acting jointly with the Croatian people in BH against the common enemy”.⁵⁸ However, that is not the only illogicality of the Directive, from which we give but an extract. That implies the probable assumption that Sefer Halilović believes that the time still has not come for familiarising the broader public with its whole content.

After the conflict had broken out in Sarajevo, the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina proclaimed, on 8 April, the Territorial defence its armed force, which met with the energetic reaction of the political leadership of BH Croats. “The decision of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on territorial defence BH, also of 8 April 1992 is at this moment politically unwise. The same Presidency has been silent about the crimes against Croat people since the beginning of aggression against Croats. Not even now does it speak loudly enough of the tragedy of the Croat settlements and people from Ravno, Neum, Kupres to Mostar. This is why Croatian Community Herceg-Bosna does not accept the compromised TO as its military structure”.⁵⁹

Military part of HVO was officially formed on 8 April 1992 as “as supreme body of Croatian defence in Herceg-Bosna” with its General Headquarters at the strategic level, and municipal headquarters at the local (municipal) level. All other military formations are considered illegal or hostile.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 1999, 378.

⁵⁶ Sefer HALILOVIĆ, *Cunning Strategy*, Matica, Sarajevo 1997, 148.

⁵⁷ In time the extremist wing of HDZ would evolve into ustasha or fascist part of HDZ. USP. S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 223, 344, Mustafa IMAMOVIĆ, “Aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and its immediate consequences”, *Aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and struggle for its survival 1992 – 1995*, Sarajevo, 1997, 9.

⁵⁸ S. HALILOVIĆ 1998, 222-224.

⁵⁹ HVO, GHQ, No: Z-01-11 of 10. 4. 1992, To all the Municipal headquarters of HVO, an order.

⁶⁰ HVO, GHQ, No: Z-01-11 of 10. 4. 1992, To all the Municipal headquarters of HVO, a command; On the same day, crisis HQs and municipal HQs of TO were renamed into Municipal

Along with the acceptance of TO BH as their armed forces, the BH Presidency, ie its muslim part started the negotiations with the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces of SFRJ, with the intention of beginning the process “which was to lead to, either JNA leaving Bosnia and Herzegovna, or to its radical transformation, where it was to become, in the end of that process, a Bosnian army, BH armed forces”⁶¹ Those negotiations are indisputably between BH Muslims and BH Serbs, and BH Croats were completely ignored in them.⁶² The period of unsuccessful negotiations with JNA and Yugoslavia ends on 20 June 1992, when the BH Presidency declares the state of war.⁶³

The conflict

From Serb ethnic regions, to which it withdrawn the equipment and personnel from Slovenia and Croatia during 1991 and 1992, JNA went into war for rounding off the territories that Serbs perceived as theirs. In that first stage of the war JNA, ie the Army of Serb Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina from 21 May, attempted, by quick manoeuvres with armoured formations along the lines suitable for advances of tanks, to put under control everything that could be captured without great efforts. Quick successes were achieved in eastern Bosnia, in the areas predominantly inhabited by Muslims. In the region of south-western Bosnia, apart from the success on Kupres, they suffered a double failure in Croatian areas around Livno. The attempt to capture Sarajevo also failed, as did the attempt in the Neretva valley. By the end of March, a bitter, several months long fighting over Bosnian Posavina started. In the region of Bosnian Krajina, where there was no significant resistance, ethnic cleansing was introduced, as well as concentration camps. In the areas where armoured and mechanized formations could not be successfully deployed, either due to adverse terrain, or organized resistance, the successes were significantly reduced. After that, the success was only achieved with enormous effort, a great exertion of both the personnel and the equipment, such as it was in Bosnian Posavina and Jajce.

Unlike Serbs, the first phase of the war with Croats and Muslims passes in the efforts to consolidate the front lines. In that context the significance of Croatian successes is of greater strategic importance than that of BH army's

headquarters of HVO.; HVO, General Headquarters, No: 01-92/92 of 10.4.1992., Toall the municipal headquarters of HVO, an order.

⁶¹ A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 115.

⁶² There is a firm argument for this statement in A. Izetbegović, and the way in which he “assembled” his story of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Namely, he has no moral dilemmas concerning the negotiations without the participation of Croats. Partly because the negotiations with the General Headquarters (Branko Kostić and Blagoje Adžić) seemingly bypass BH Serbs, and partly because of the negotiations between Mate Boban and Radovan Karadžić of a month before, 5-6 April 1992. After that, he has no moral dilemma to negotiate the future status of JNA without Croats, in Macedonia, on 26 April 1992. A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 111.

⁶³ A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 115.

successes for a simple reason.⁶⁴ They were connected to Croatia, which was a logistic base and a support for both endangered peoples. Combat engagements of Croatian Army, ie ZNG in the northern and south-east borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with mutual support with HVO, meant also a direct support to TO BH, later ABiH in the depth of the territory, as they engaged in combat a part of Bosnian Serb forces, and made possible the logistic and humanitarian traffic.⁶⁵ In that first phase of bare survival there are no conflicts between HVO and TO BH, at least not on any significant scale, only the incidents in central Bosnia, in Uskoplje and Busovača. There are also cases where Muslims officially relinquish to HVO the organization and conduct of defence policy.⁶⁶

Combat engagements in 1992, in the areas with the majority of Croat population, western and north-western Herzegovina, areas of great karst valleys, central Bosnia, Vrbas Valley and Posavina, were marked predominantly by the defence actions of Croatian and attacks of Serbian forces. After many months of fighting, the formations of VRS with reinforcements from the Territorial defence of The Republic of Serbian Krajina succeeded in capturing a greater part of Posavina, and retained, for them strategically important, connection with Serbia (the corridor). They also captured Jajce.

With the fall of Jajce and Bosnian Posavina, for HVO the war with VRS had reached the stalemate.⁶⁷ With the help of Croatian Army, HVO had more

⁶⁴ It is significant that, when writing about the first months of the war, the military authors from ABiH put an emphasis to the defence of Sarajevo, while other combat engagements in other areas are much less analysed. One of the reasons is the starting position that, with respect to the two other protagonists, they are "more constitutional", based on the army that in its title has the name of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which implies the control over Sarajevo as a capital. The successes by HVO and the role of HV in the survival of ABiH are completely ignored. Usp. H. EFENDIĆ, 1998, Jovan DIVJAK, "The first phase of the war 1992-1993: the struggle for survival and inception of ABiH", *The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Hezegovina* 1991-1995, 1999, 181-205.

⁶⁵ In that regard, a collective amnesia is evident not only in Bosnia and Hezegovina, but also in Croatia. The members of TO BH, or ABiH, depending of their involvement, claim that TO BH or Patriotic league saved Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first phase of the war, which is a hardly plausible construct. Namely, in the first phase of the war, greater part of the 2nd (Sarajevo) and parts of the 4th (Podgorica) military districts, ie the Army of Serb Republic of BH later on, were engaged in combat with Croatian Army and HVO. TO BH engaged the whole Sarajevo corps (former 4th cormps of JNA), and greater parts of the 2nd krajina corps (parts of the former 9th and 10th corps of JNA), while the main force of the 1st krajina, Hezegovinian, and Semberia corps were fighting with HV and HVO.

⁶⁶ The Assembly of the Municipality of Mostar, Crisis HQ of the municipality, No: 427/92 of 29.4.1992., The Decision, *Mostar Morning*, 13.9.1992., 5: On 2 June 1992, the crisis HQ of the Municipality of Maglaj entrusted to HVO Žepče, Zavidović, Maglaj and Teslić the defence of the municipality of Maglaj. Crisis HQ of the municipality of Maglaj, No: 01-98-1/92 of 2.6.1992., A decision. The decision was cancelled on 22 March 1993. War presidency of the municipality of Maglaj, No: 01-023-108/93 of 22.3.1993., The decision of discontinuation of the validity of the Decision of the municipal crisis HQ on the defence of the municipality of Maglaj from Serbian-chetnik aggression. Transcript and facsimile of the decision in Anto MARINČIĆ, *The Municipality of Žepče or the Key to the Functioning of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Ceres, Zagreb, 2000, 30, 58, 218.

⁶⁷ The critics of F. Tuđman maintain that was an arranged territorial exchange, especially in

or less reached the stalemate with the Serbs. It was achieved through the successful defence of Livno, Šujica, parts of Vrbas valley and central Bosnia, and especially the successful engagement in the Neretva valley, where Mostar had been put under control. After that, there was only positional fighting, of which the occasional exceptions were Usora and parts of Posavina battlefield. Offensive engagements in Podveležje in the operation "Bura" of begin. November 1992, ended without any significant success.⁶⁸ The intention of liberating Kupres, which was being planned towards the end of 1992, had remained an unrealised idea until November of 1994. Several meetings of the leaders of Bosnian Serbs and Croats outside BH during 1992, seem to have yielded no concrete effects. Summarizing the events of 1992, the chief of HVO General Headquarters concluded that "HVO forces, despite many problems and difficulties, held under control 70% of the free territory in BH, and that, by forming their armed forces in the regions of HZ H-B, Croat people defended themselves and bigger part of Muslims".⁶⁹ The characteristic of the military wing of HVO is a militia organization, formed in municipalities, immobile, with a pronounced defensive character. More mobile were professional units, which were few in numbers, and which improved in terms of quality in 1994 by grouping into guard brigades and several units under headquarters, which were on the level of infantry battalions. At the end of 1992, HVO had approximately 45.000 men in the four operational zones. The formations under Operational zone South-Eastern Herzegovina were best manned (95%), and Operational zone Posavina the least (app. 40%). The other two operational zones, Central Bosnia and North-Western Herzegovina had approximately 60% of the needed personnel in their formations. In the professional units HVO had 855 men, of which 85 officers, 91 non-commissioned officers, and 670 soldiers.⁷⁰

The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina had least reasons for satisfaction. At the end of 1992, it had under its control the most unfavourable ratio between the number of people and the area it controlled. Unlike HVO, BH Army transformed into a corps organization of a JNA model, creating the units of a manoeuvre structure, and those of a territorial structure. For the sake of comparison with HVO, the 3rd corps of ABiH had, according to the statement of its commander of the end November 1992, "over 40.000 men".⁷¹ The biggest weakness of that army with respect to HVO was a poorer ratio of the weapons for infantry support and infantry personnel.⁷² Despite the number of ABiH

regard of Bosnia Posavina. Compare: The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995, 1999; I. BANAC 2001, 145; A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 131.

⁶⁸ RBiH, TG-1 Konjic of 8.11.1992., ŠVK OS RbiH, Daily report.

⁶⁹ HVO General Headquarters, Off. Reg. No: 01-240 of 04.02.1993, to the government of HZ H-B, The report for the period 14.4.1992. -31. 12. 1992.

⁷⁰ HVO General Headquarters, Off. Reg. No: 01-240 of 04.02.1993., to the government of HZ H-B, The report for the period 14.4.1992. -31. 12. 1992.

⁷¹ Municipal headquarters - Novi Travnik, No: 362-92 of 26.11.1992, the Report of the Municipal headquarters of Novi Travnik from the meeting with BH Army Novi Travnik.

⁷² At the very end of 1992, HVO in the Operational zone Central Bosnia had artillery which,

soldiers, it did not have, apart from preserving Sarajevo, Bihać and Goražde, results worthy of attention in offensive operations by the end of 1992. At the end of the year it still was in a stalemate position with respect to Bosnian Serbs due to the unstable battlefield in eastern Bosnia.

The ratio was completely different a year later, after months long conflicts with Croatian Defence Council. Summarizing the Bosniak-Croat war with the Croats, the commander ABiH said in the February of 1994 that "HVO has been eliminated from the areas of Jablanica, Konjic, Fojnica, Kakanj, Zenica, Travnik and Bugojno. Meaning, a complete one province as in the Vance-Owen plan with a capital in Travnik".⁷³

The attitude of the Republic of Croatia towards the defence of BH

Immediately upon the escalation of the conflicts in BH, General Martin Špegelj, as a chief inspector of the defence of the Croatian Defence Ministry, asked, on 7 April 1992, from the minister of defence of the Republic of Croatia to form a group of 1.200 soldiers (mostly Muslims) from the area of the Operational zone Rijeka, and send them to Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁴ The request was granted, with a provision that it should start with a group of 300-400 soldiers, who were to retain all the rights of the soldiers of Croatian army "including monthly salaries", with the obligation to remove the insignia of Croatian army and other identification documents.⁷⁵ The Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia allowed that "Muslim party in Croatia should be given, for the purposes of defence of the population exposed to the aggression, a certain quantity of weapons and ammunition, within the means of Croatian Army."⁷⁶ The practice of issuing weapons and ammunition for the purposes of the defence of Muslims, or Bosniaks, by the authorities of the Republic of Croatia lasted until the April of 1993 at most.⁷⁷ How much of it reached its final destination, due to stopping of transports by HVO and re-directioning

by JNA standards, was bellow what an infantry brigade should have formation wise. The Command of OZ Srednja Bosna, IZM Travnik, No: 19118/92 of 29.12.1992. to the general Headquarters of HVO, Artillery data.

⁷³ Rasim DELIĆ, *The Army as a Key to the Peace*, Military library, Sarajevo, 1994, 19. In Delić's book of 2001, that speech is located on 5 March 1994, and not 26 February 1994. Besides, it differs in certain parts and words. Rasim DELIĆ, *It is an Honour to Defend Bosnia*, The Council of the Bosnian Intellectuals Congress, Sarajevo, 2001, 251.

⁷⁴ Chief defence inspector, Kl. 822, No: 512-20-92-01 of 7.4.1992, to the Ministry of Defence.

⁷⁵ Chief defence inspector, Kl. 8/92-01/23, No: 5120-03-92-9 of 9.4.1992, to the commander of OZ Rijeka.

⁷⁶ Ministry of Defence, No: 512-01-92-181 of 10.04.1992., to the Chief of Staff GHQ of Croatian Army; Minister of the defence on the same day ordered his aide to issue Muhamed Zulić, a minister in the Cabinet of RH with 50 automatic rifles with ammunition for the "purpose of defence of the attacked Muslim population". Ministry of Defence, No: 512-01-92-182 of 10.4.1992., to the Minister's aide.

⁷⁷ RH, Ministry of Defence, Cl.003-05/92-01/252, No.:512-07-06/92-01/252 of 25.08.1992.; technical – transport administration, instruction: Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 27.08.1992., Approval: RH, Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-

by ABiH, is yet to be investigated. The arms sent to the 4th ABiH corps, despite prolongations by HVO, for the most part reached their destination, at least until mid March 1993. Until mid 1993, despite the arms embargo, ABiH had brought in, according to the statement of A. Izetbegović, 30 thousands rifles and machine-guns, 20 million bullets, 37 thousands mines, and 46 thousands anti-tank missiles.⁷⁸ It is indubitable that those quantities of arms came in through Croatia and the territory held by BH Croats, since the Sarajevo republic was at war with Yugoslavia, sea ports it did not have, and air traffic over BH was forbidden and cancelled by the UN Resolution.⁷⁹

In mid May 1992, Croatian Army General Headquarters, upon receiving a plea for help from the co-ordinator for combat engagements in the region of Northern Posavina, gave the instruction to the commander of the Operative Group Eastern Posavina to give all the necessary help.⁸⁰ The military attaché of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Croatia hired for help, on a voluntary basis, major-general of Croatian Army Mate Šarlija – Daidža.⁸¹ For the collection of relief and sending men to Bosnia and Herzegovina a logistic base of “Handžar divizija” was organized in Zagreb.⁸² The logistics centre, ie the GHQ for support, was in Rijeka.⁸³

Due to the objections to the presence of Croatian Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 7 July 1992, the deployment of Croatian army outside borders of the Republic of Croatia without “express order of the Commander in Chief” was forbidden. The volunteers from Croatian army, who are of Bosnia and Herzegovina origin, could continue to go to the “war zones and defend

01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 29.09.1992., Spc. – Prečko, Instruction; RH, Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 22.09.1992; Spc – Prečko, Instruction; RH Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 22.09.1992.; Spc – Prečko, Instruction; RH Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 22.09.1992.; Spc, Prečko, Instruction; RH Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 22.09.1992.; Spc, Prečko, Instruction; RH Ministry of Defence, Cl. 003-05/92-01/252, No. 512-07-06/92-01/252 of 16.10.1992.; to technical - transport administration, Instruction; RH, Ministry of Defence, Cl. 213-01/93-03/01, No. 512-08/93-01 of 26.03.1993.; TPU MORH, instruction; RH Ministry of Defence, Cl. 213-01/93-03/01, No. 512-08/93-01 of 30.03.1993., TPU MORH, instruction.

⁷⁸ A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 119-120.

⁷⁹ The ABiH commander Rasim Delić stated on 26 February 1994, on the Panel of the Council of Bosniak-Muslim intellectuals that HVO, in the period from November 1992 to May 1993 completely blocked the influx of military material for ABiH, which was in obvious collision with the claims of president Izetbegović. Rasim DELIĆ, *The Army as the Key to Peace*, Military library, Sarajevo, 1994, Compare: A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 119-120.

⁸⁰ HV General Headquarters, Cl. 8/92-01/23, No: 5120-03-92-17 of 14.5.1992., to the Command OG “Eastern Posavina”.

⁸¹ R BiH, The office of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Republic of Croatia, No: 572/92 of 12.10.1992, Authorisation.

⁸² R BiH, The office of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Republic of Croatia, No: 05-674/92 of 12.11.1992, the order: Colonel Efendić Hasan, to the logistic base of “Handžar Divizija” Zagreb, The sending of troops to Cazin krajina, R BiH, ABiH, The commission GHQ of BH armed forces for Croatia, Zagreb, No: 35/92 of 4.9.1992., a certificate.

⁸³ R BiH, The GHQ for support to BH, No: GŠ-01-18/92-RI/ST-O of 2.10.1992., to the HVO General Headquarters.

their homes”⁸⁴ The order had negative effect on the engagement of Croatian army around the state borders, principally in Bosnian Posavina.

Not even after the signing of the Agreement on amity and co-operation between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in Zagreb on 21 June 1992 were there any changes. The president of the Republic of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, referred to the signed Agreement as historical, and the president of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović judged it as important. In an interview he gave on the same day for the Croatian television, Izetbegović explained that the time had not yet come for a military agreement, which the Serb people would have certainly “perceived as a threat”, and that it would be better to “leave some more space for the international factors to act”⁸⁵

Another thing that testifies on Muslim’s perception of Croatia is the visit of a delegation of Muslims to the Command of Operational Zone Karlovac which included: the assistant to the military attaché in the BH Embassy from Zagreb, the commander of the ABiH mobilisation centre in Croatia, HV officer who worked voluntarily towards the help to RBiH. They were looking for premises near frontline towards Bihać for the accommodation of formations of draftees with a Cazinska krajina origin. The visit was interesting because of bypassing the strategic institutions of RH, who were the only ones who could have given approval for such an arrangement.⁸⁶ Finally, the military delegation of RBH made an official request on 26 January 1993. The request is indicative of the engagement of the Croatian Army towards Bihać, ie the 5th corps of BH Army.⁸⁷

An interesting phenomenon is that the citizens of BH who fought in the Armed forces of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina demand that to be recognized officially as the service in the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia.⁸⁸

Croatian – Muslim military and political co-operation

The political and military co-operation of SDA/TO, or ABH and HDZ/HVO in the first months, at the current level of insight, seems to have been rather modest. The reason is simple: both sides were occupied with their own

⁸⁴ Ministry of Defence of 7.7.1992., the instruction of the minister of Defence to all the commands of Croatian Army.

⁸⁵ Dubravko MERLIĆ, *Picture on Picture*, Zagreb 1994, 37.

⁸⁶ The Command of OZ Karlovac, Cl. 81/93-01/01, NO: 1078-16/1-93-15 of 12.1.1993., to the General Headquarters of HV.

⁸⁷ R BH, The office of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Republic of Croatia, No: 05-829/93 of 26.1.1993., to the General Headquarters of Croatian Army; “My aircrafts have flown to Bihać over 100 times, we sometimes did it without the knowledge of the official authorities in Croatia”, *Slobodna Bosna*, 16.3.2000., 44.

⁸⁸ RBiH, The office of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Republic of Croatia, No: 04-2443 of 11.3.1993, to the General Headquarters of MORH, The requests for the defining the status of the RH citizens – fighters of the BiH Army.

problems, forming units, fighting Serbs, and Croats were unsuccessfully trying to reach an agreement with Serbs on the cease fire and demarcation, while Muslims, through negotiations with Yugoslavia without Croats were attempting to put JNA under their control. In that period the relations between HVO and ABH, ie HDZ and SDA differs on tactical level from place to place. The co-operation is weakest in areas where the Croats and Muslims are equally numerous, and thus neither party can dominate the other. It was especially characteristic in central Bosnia. As early as in mid 1992, there are complaints at both sides against the other side.⁸⁹ The attempts at co-operation were insincere at both sides, which is a result of the differing war objectives and interests. Muslims soon assumed the attitude of the most legitimate protagonist in the BH war drama, which the Croats did not accept and did not attribute any great significance to it. The attempts of co-operation would happen towards the end of July 1992, thanks to the efforts of the Republic of Croatia. The Republic of Croatia was admitted into Bosnia and Herzegovina "through the front gate" by muslim side, setting up a relationship that was in the long term favourable for them, and which mostly harmed BH Croats. The winning formula amounted to the pressure of Croatia on BH Croats for the sake of higher interests (the interests of an integral, but in reality, non-existent Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as direct accusations against Croatia for some actions of BH Croats. An illustrative example is the letter from A. Izetbegović to F. Tuđman⁹⁰ of 5 July 1992, and Tuđman's reply the day after.⁹¹ There is a lot of confusion in their relations until the 21 July. The moves of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia are immediately treated as an enactment of a policy from Zagreb.⁹² In the Agreement of 21 July 1992, it was attempted to make some order in the mutual relations of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also to create preconditions for a more constructive relationship between Muslims and Croats.⁹³

The attempts at Croato-Muslim co-operation include a short episode with the Croatian Party of Rights and its military wing, Croatian Defence Forces (HOS). The prevailing view today is that HOS, as a heterogeneous armed group consisting of Croats and Muslims, supported co-operation

⁸⁹ HZ H-B, Municipal HVO headquarters of Gornji Vakuf, Strictly conf. No: 1-5/4-2/92 of 22.6.1992. to the president of HZ H-B, The report on the events in the area of our municipality for 20-21.6.1992.; R BiH, General Headquarters of the armed forces, Department Visoko, No: 01/47-1 of 31.7.1992., to the General Headquarters of OS R BiH, the situation in the territory of Travnik, N. Travnik, Bugojno and G. Vakuf, a report. The transcript of the report in R. DELIĆ, 2001, 637-639.

⁹⁰ A part of Izetbegović's letter to Tuđman of 5 July 1992 in Zdravko GAVRAN, *How they were dismantling Tuđman*, Domovina TT, Zagreb 1992, 111-112.

⁹¹ The transcript of Dr. Franjo Tuđman's reply to the letter of Alija Izetbegović in K. ROTIM, 1997, I., 315-316; Extract from the letter in Z. GAVRAN, 1992., 115.

⁹² Z. GAVRAN, 1992., 111-112.

⁹³ The Agreement on amity and co-operation between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia of 21 July 1992, *Mostar Morning*, 13.9.1992., 7.

⁹⁴ *The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 1999, 389.

between Croats and Muslims.⁹⁴ Such views transformed the HOS, which had a problematic iconography and was politically dubious, into a group the disintegration of which is deeply lamented, as it was the integral BH that was “close to their heart”. Such opinions ignore the fact that the HOS views on Bosnia and Herzegovina were a legacy from the period of NDH (Independent State of Croatia), ie the integral state organization of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹⁵ However, HOS as a whole did not function integrally in the whole territory of BH. In the area of Mostar, HOS was on bad terms with HVO and close to BH Army until the death of their commander.⁹⁶ Towards the end of June 1992, Zenica Sector of the State Security Service estimated HOS an agent of HVO in the area of Novi Travnik, as it was on the side of HVO during the conflict of 19 June 1992.⁹⁷ By the end of 1992, HOS had lost the significance of an armed factor, having divided along ethnic lines.⁹⁸

After the Agreement on amity and co-operation had been signed between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia on 21 July 1992.⁹⁹, the preconditions were secured for the co-operation of HVO and ABiH. The Presidency of RBiH, in a session held on 6 August 1992, accepted HVO as an integral part of RBiH Army, as well as other armed formations who were prepared to put themselves under the common command.¹⁰⁰ The attempts of co-operation had not happened by the autumn of 1992 after all. The problem was in the different views on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina with respect to the current time. Those problems were eloquently depicted by the failed meeting of the civil and military representatives from the regions of Upper Vrbas and Lašva, which was held on 15 August 1992 in Travnik. The agreement was not reached due to the mutual accusations concerning the muslim unitary policy and the question of the Croats’ blame for the situation in the region. Ending the report on the meeting, the representative of the Municipal HVO headquarters of gornji Vakuf quoted the words of the president of the Municipal Assembly of Travnik that “Wherever Serbs and Muslims lived, Muslims perished. Wherever Croats and Serbs lived, Croats

⁹⁵ “We cannot let the wrong Boban’s politics to come back at us. We are absolutely for the unity of Croat people and its common defence, but we are likewise for the unity with Muslim people. We shall not retreat from our policy of the integral Bosnia and Herzegovina, ie Croatia to Drina. Any other policy would mean a division of Herzeg-Bosnia and creation of a new Serbian state this side of Drina, which would be a disaster for both Croat and Muslim people,” wrote Dobroslav Paraga, the president of HSP and Commander in Chief of HOS, in a letter to Darko Kraljević. General Headquarters of HOS of 21.8.1992., to major Darko Kraljević.

⁹⁶ The Command of the war Headquarters of HOS for Herzegovnia of 28.5.1992, Information.

⁹⁷ Centre of Security Service, Sector SDB Zenica of 27.6.1992., official note.

⁹⁸ RBiH, ABiH, The command of the 4th corps, Strictly confidential, No: 01-262/92 of 29.12.1992., to the logistics of the 4th corps, The organization of the ABiH units in the region of Blagaj.

⁹⁹ K. ROTIM, 1997., book 1, 316-317.

¹⁰⁰ RBiH, Ministry of defence, No: 01-110/92 of 9.8.1992., HVO General Headquarters.

perished, but wherever Croats and Muslims live, both are alive, but they have not come to an agreement yet".¹⁰¹

At the first meeting of the high representatives from HVO, VRS and ABiH in Sarajevo on 7 October 1992., the Chief of Staff of the General Headquarters of HVO warned the deputy commander of ŠVK ABiH of "the following:

- That those from the Presidency of the military Command had direct contacts with HOS and Kraljević (and they were in my /brigadier general Milivoj Petković/ immediate vicinity).
- That they sent 12 officers to join HOS, not finding it appropriate to send them to me.
- That they have daily contacts with Mr. (Arif) Pašalić, who is at a mere 300 metres' distance from me, so had they wanted to, they would have contacted me, too (Brigadier General Milivoj Petković).
- That they had even considered us a paramilitary formation, although we were formed before BH Army.
- That they could have mentioned us so far at least in the media.
- That they are taking muslims from the units and from their combat positions, and form some units of their own".¹⁰²

The presidents of the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had, in Zagreb, on 1 November 1992, a meeting on agreement and co-operation. An example of that co-operation was supposed to be the Joint Command with colonel Jaganjac¹⁰³ in command, and general Praljak, which the passing of time did not render acceptable, mostly from Bosniak-Muslim side.¹⁰⁴ The problem was also how to title this Joint command of HVO and ABiH, either Croat or Muslim, because of the status of general Praljak, who then was an assistant minister of the defence of the Republic of Croatia.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Municipal headquarters of HVO Gornji Vakuf, a short review of the meeting in Travnik, held on 18.8.1992.

¹⁰² HVO, General Headquarters, No: 01-2331/92 of 12.10.1992., to the president of HZ H-B, report on the talks in Sarajevo. Several invitations to the HVO from Sarajevo in Stjepan ŠIBER, *Deceits, Misconceptions, and the Truth: War Log 1992.*, Rabić, Sarajevo 2000. So far, I have found no indications that any of those letters were received in the General Headquarters of HVO, which is not a sign that they did not reach Mostar or Grude.

¹⁰³ The Presidency of RBiH, President's cabinet of 4.11.1992., to Jasmin Jaganjac.

¹⁰⁴ "Jaganjac and Praljak are in some common headquarters, which is to be replacement for the High command in Sarajevo. Whatever is this war going to bring about? Who to obey? Divjak and Karić are confused", Mirsad Ćatić, an ABiH officer, wrote his dilemmas in his personal diary on 13 November 1992. Mirsad, ĆATIĆ ČUPERAK, *Shadow over Igman: War Log, 1992 – 1996*, DALSA Bosna, Sarajevo, 2000, 235,

¹⁰⁵ TG Konjic of 4. 11. 1992., GŠ VK OS RBiH, special report.

Duality of government

A major bone of contention in the mutual relations of HVO and ABiH, ie HDZ and SDA, was the existence of the two parallel political and military structures in the mixed regions, central parts of Bosnia and north-western Herzegovina. Those are a reflection of a deep mutual distrust, and differing views on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is well illustrated by the sentences of one of the members of the war presidency of Novi Travnik municipality: "The fundamental problem of Novi Travnik is the two governments, HVO and ours, ostensibly regular. There are collisions and conflicts. It will keep happening. The Prime Minister is not allowed into the Municipal building without ID. It is better to divide. We will fight again. There have been various offers, to Muslims and Croats to form their government. We have been trying to give the same number of people from every nation into the government, observing the principle of parity".¹⁰⁶ The problem was a general one, it occurred since the beginning of April 1992, and it was to stay unsolved throughout the war. It was especially pronounced in central Bosnia, an area where the war was the most intensive. Analysing the causes of the conflict in Prozor, the commander of the Operational Zone of North-western Herzegovina rightfully concluded that the only preventive remedy for avoiding such conflict is prohibition of existence of "two commands, two armies, two logistics and so on".¹⁰⁷ The commander of 17th krajina brigade of ABiH reasoned similarly, judging that one of the problems of the unsuccessful defence of Jajce was that "one town was defended by two commands".¹⁰⁸ Certainly the best known attempt at solving the problem of duality of government is well known order of the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina of 16 January 1993. The said order has 9 counts, and only the one under ordinal number 2. was made known to the general public. That count states that all the formations of ABiH stationed in the provinces 3,8, and 10 are to be subordinate to the General Headquarters of Croatian Defence Council. According to the 1st count "All the formations of HVO, which at this moment are stationed in the areas of the provinces 1, 5, and 9, which were declared Muslim provinces in the Geneva agreement, are to be subordinated to the General Headquarters of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina".¹⁰⁹

From the military point of view, no fault can be found with this order. It was an unsuccessful attempt of defining areas of responsibility and jurisdiction after which both parties were supposed to have a clearer picture of their position in time, space, and, most importantly, their objectives. However, it seems

¹⁰⁶ Municipal headquarters Novi Travnik, No. 362/92 of 26. 11. 1992, the report of the commander of the Municipal headquarters of Novi Travnik from the meeting with ABiH Novi Travnik.

¹⁰⁷ The Command OZ SZ Herzegovina, No: 135/92 of 10.11.1992., GS HVO HZ HB. The report on the command no: 01-2437/92. GS HVO.

¹⁰⁸ "Krajina People Defend Jajce", *Bosniak*, 4.4.1995., Feuilleton on the chivalrous Krajina brigade.

¹⁰⁹ RBiH, Ministry of defence, No: 01/93 of 16.1.1993., GS HVO, order.

to have been the very problem, or reason, why one of the sides rejected it, and why the reaction to it was a political one, but with an emphasis on the military component. After that follows a period in which the essence of mutual relations in the field of defence can be seen from the correspondence of the minister of defence of R BiH (a Croat) and Chief of Staff of Headquarters of High Command OS R BiH (a Muslim).¹¹⁰

The permanent source of differences between HVO and TO, or ABiH, were the officers, of which a part had had a history of combat engagements in Croatia against Croatian people. In HVO, a part of the commissioned personnel had also had the experience from the war in Croatia, of course, on the opposite side. Both these groups were, which is hardly surprising, suspicious towards one another, with a reserve that the former commissioned personnel of JNA was not always looked kindly upon even on Muslim-Bosniak side.¹¹¹ It should not be forgotten that such people were characterised by a strong urge to prove their orthodoxy, so it was not a rare case that a declared, supernatural Yugoslav (besides, as a rule, an atheist) turns into a radical nationalist or an orthodox, but novice believer.

After that conflict, the tensions began to grow within HVO, which was the only one with a certain multi-ethnicity in its formations, although that fact is disputed in implausible constructs.¹¹² Multinational formations in the area

¹¹⁰ General Headquarters of HVO, Dj. No. 01-193 of 30.01.1993., NŠVK OS R BH the reply to the act strictly confidential No. 106-01 of 26.01.1993. and the request for cessation of hostilities; General Headquarters of HVO, Dj. No. 01-238 of 04.02.1993., to the General Head Quarters of ABiH, the cessation of all engagement. The document dears in accurate date of 4 January; General Headquarters of HVO, Dj. No. 01-259 of 09.02.1993. to the General Head Quarters of high command, OS R BiH; R BiH, General Head Quarters of of high command, OS R BiH, No. 001/167-22 of 09.03.1993., to the Ministry of Defence R BiH; R BiH, Ministry of Defence, No. 01-05/93 of 10.03.1993., to the General Headquarters of ABiH; R BiH, the Headquarters of high command OS. General Headquarters of HVO, Dj. No. 01-193 of 30.01.1993., NŠVK OS R BH the reply to the act strictly confidential No. 106-01 of 26.01.1993. and the request for cessation of hostilities; General Headquarters of HVO, Dj. No. 01-238 of 04.02.1993., to the General Head Quarters of ABiH, the cessation of all engagement. The document dears in accurate date of 4 January; General Headquarters of HVO, Dj. No. 01-259 of 09.02.1993. to the General Head Quarters of high command, OS R BiH; R BiH, General Head Quarters of of high command, OS R BiH, No. 001/167-22 of 09.03.1993., to the Ministry of Defence R BiH; R BiH, Ministry of Defence, No. 01-05/93 of 10.03.1993., to the General Headquarters of ABiH; R BiH, the Headquarters of high command OS RBH, No. 001-167-138 of 11.04.1993., to the Ministry of Defence RBH. A copy of the letter was sent to the Chief of staff of the general Headquarters of Croatian army. The transcript of the letter in S. HALILOVIĆ, 1998., 257, RBH, Ministry of Defence, No. 01-RI-11/93 of 14.04.1993., to the Headquarters of high command OS R BiH.

¹¹¹ The command of the 4th corps, No: 02-1465-1/93 of 21.3.1993. to the department of territorial structure of ŠVK OS R BiH. Analysis of the experience of the B/D of the units of territorial structure.

¹¹² For 18 December 1992, in the collection of the works from Budimpešta, we can read that "HVO assumes all the power in the territory it controls: they disband the legal municipal assemblies, replaces the mayors and members of the local administration who oppose the confrontation with Bosniaks, and disarms the remaining Bosniak soldiers (except in Posavina). HVO and ABiH for the most part are national homogeneous and bitterly opposed politically" *The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 1999, 391.

of BH, to a larger extent, only existed in HVO, principally in the operational zones of south-east Herzegovina and Bosnian Posavina. In operational zone of Central Bosnia there were not any, and in North-western Herzegovina a significant percentage was in brigades "Petar Krešimir IV" from Livno, and "Rama" from Prozor.¹¹³ That such formations could get into unenviable positions is well illustrated by the reply of the Command of the 42nd mountain brigade ABiH of mid April 1993 to the ultimatum order of the 1st brigade of HVO saying, among the rest: "I emphasize, and you are perfectly well aware of that, that a large number of muslim soldiers is in your units, and they are Muslims and belong to this nation, so it would not be well that a certain organization and formation of your unit should thus be disturbed".¹¹⁴ After 30 June 1993, when, through treason of a larger group of muslim HVO soldiers, Sjeverni logor barracks in Mostar fell into the enemy hands, and the 2nd brigade of HVO disintegrated, an intensive process of disarming unreliable soldiers began.¹¹⁵ The process was completed towards the end of 1993, except in the region of military district Orašje.¹¹⁶

On the other hand, a certain multi-ethnicity existed on the strategic level in the Headquarters of high Command of ABiH, but only on the formal level of creating an illusion of multi-ethnicity.¹¹⁷ The multi-ethnicity of ABiH abruptly increased in the autumn of 1993 after the attack on the HVO units in the area of jurisdiction of 1st and 2nd corps ABiH, and their transformation into Croatian brigades of ABiH.

¹¹³ In the beginning of June of 1993 "Rama" brigade had in its formations 471 muslims, or 23,3% of the soldiers in the brigade. Brigade "Petar Krešimir IV" had 767 Muslims, ie 24,85% of the total number of soldiers, while brigade "Kralj Tomislav" from Tomislavgrad, Kupres and Posušje had in its formations 296 or 9,69% of Muslims. Croatian state archives in Zagreb, ZDRBiH, box 4474: the Command OZ S/Z H. NO: 01-5-260/93 of 8.6.1993., to the Department of defence of HZ HB, the report on the bringing up of the brigades to full complement.

¹¹⁴ The command of 42nd mountain brigade ("Bregava"), No: 01-1024/93 of 18.4. 1993. to the command of the HVO brigade Knez Domagoj.

¹¹⁵ GS HVO, No: 02-2/1-01-1245/93 of 30.6.1993., to the department of defence, a report.

¹¹⁶ Operational zone "Bosnian Posavina", No: 01-01/93-1434/2 of 19.4.1993., to the chief of staff of GS HVO, an estimate.

¹¹⁷ In the month of May, I handed in my resignation because in the city of Sarajevo there were numerous instances of violent criminal behaviour towards the citizens of the city of Sarajevo. On that occasion, the bandit group controlled by Topalović Mušan – Caco severely wounded my son Želimir in the Street of Maršal Tito. Upon your request that I should think it over and see what it would mean for the interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I thought you meant it seriously, that you need me as a third member of the constitutional nations in the Headquarters of TO RBiH. It was only because I believed in your sincere intentions that I withdrew my resignation" wrote Jovan Divjak, deputy Chief of Staff of ŠVK OS RBiH to president Izetbegović, as well as that "in the thirteen months of war I have never been treated as deputy, but as the third in line. I can corroborate that I have never been included in the planning and organizing operations, combats and battles of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" Divjak Jovan, Deputy NŠVK OS RBiH, 02/688-1 of 27.5.1993., VK OS RBiH Alija Izetbegović, resignation from the duty of deputy NŠ VK OS. Transcript of the resignation in A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 401-404.

The consequences of ethnic cleansing

The major problem of Muslim-Croat relations was caused by the third, Serb side, with their conquests and the practise of ethnic cleansing. Enormous masses of displaced persons and refugees were flowing into muslim-croatian areas from the areas controlled by VRS. A part of them went to Croatia and farther abroad, while the male population fit for fighting mostly stayed. That way the ethnic structure was disturbed, which lead to the new balance of power between Muslims and Croats, especially in mixed areas of central Bosnia. Most of the refugees came from rural areas in urban ones bringing different mentality. The towns in ethnically mixed areas had the experience of multi-culturality, which, in principle, was not the case with villages. HVO was aware of the change in ethnic structure which reinforced Muslim position, so the views of HVO Gornji Vakuf on the uncertain future were characteristic – In their report of the mid June 1992, after the second conflict with ABiH in less than two months, they wrote that “ there are 12.000 refugees from Donji Vakuf in our area, and all of them are Muslims with a large proportion of men fit for military service, so if they arm themselves, then not only is our municipality in danger, but also our neighbours (Bugojno, Novi Travnik, Travnik), and it is our conclusion that it is us who are their principal enemies, and only then the chetniks”¹¹⁸ After local Muslim-Croat conflicts, one of the first Croat demands was for the withdrawal of the foreigners from the areas of municipalities.¹¹⁹

The conflict of “natural allies”

The Muslim-Croat conflict, which marked the year of 1993, had a prelude, which dates from the first days of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. “In the SJB (station of public security, ie police station) Bugojno the war militia were issued with ammunition, but only the members of Muslim nationality, with a remark that it should be hidden from the members of Croat nationality. In Gornji Vakuf strained relations between Croats and Muslims”. Although these two sentences seemingly depict the situation as it was in the end of 1992 beginning of 1993, they had been written much earlier, on 2 April 1992, in a regular daily report of, in this case an “impartial” Command of the 30th partisan division of JNA, which immediately prior to the break out of the war in BH had a responsibility zone from the Kupres plateau, across the valley of river Vrbas to the pass of Komar with the hinterland in the broader area of Janje.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ HZ-HB, municipal headquarters of HVO Gornji Vakuf, Strictly confidential, No: 1-5/4-2/92of 22.6.1992, to the president of HZ H-B, the report on the events in the area of our municipality for 20-21.6.1992.

¹¹⁹ After the conflict in January 1993 in Gornji Vakuf, ABiH fulfilled the request of HVO to withdraw from that area the 305th mountain brigade formed from the Muslim refugees from Jajce. In the brochure about the war path of the brigade it is treated as “a confirmation that the fighters of Jajce had proven themselves as the true defenders of the Bosnia and Herzegovina”, and not as a factor that disturbed the security balance. *The war path of 305. mountain brigade*, Zenica 1994, 10.

¹²⁰ The Command of 30 partisan division., Strict. Conf. No: 174-66 of 2.4.1992., to the command of the 5th corps, regular combat report.

Distrustful mutual relations which were recorded by the army intelligence organs of 30th partisan division of JNA were almost a rule in all environments where there was an approximate percentage of both nations, ie where number of neither was big enough for overcoming the other side. In such areas neither side could confidently impose themselves to the other side. In that respect we can state that, in principle, it was exactly this kind of areas that existed in BH: the nationally balanced areas and homogeneous national areas, or areas where one of the “fundamental” nations had exceptionally pronounced domination. All the conflicts from 1992 which preceded the open war happened in such areas, more precisely in the area of central Bosnia.¹²¹ The only exception to this is the conflict in Sarajevo, the settlement of Stup, which was a small Croat oasis in an area predominantly populated by Muslims.

Both Croats and Muslims were in similar ways hostages of central Bosnia. Neither side succeeded in effecting absolute domination in a compact area, which gradually turned from a constant intolerance into an open war which affected other areas in at least two ways. On one hand, it was an area from which the conflict spread into other mixed areas, and on the other, it meant jeopardizing the traffic and transport, both the humanitarian and military. After the fighting for those, several ethnically clean enclaves were established, often a smaller one within a bigger one.

In the beginning of May the Busovača conflict broke out,¹²² which was repeated the following month.¹²³ In Novi Travnik, in the afternoon hours of 19 June, a conflict “between the units of the TO headquarters on one side, and HVO and HOS units on the other side” broke out¹²⁴ There also was national intolerance in Konjic,¹²⁵ and in the beginning of August the conflict

¹²¹ Both Croats and Muslims were in similar ways hostages of central Bosnia. Neither side succeeded in effecting absolute domination in a compact area, which gradually turned from a constant intolerance into an open war which affected other areas in at least two ways. On one hand, it was an area from which the conflict spread into other mixed areas, and on the other, I meant jeopardizing the traffic and transport, both the humanitarian and military. After the fighting for those, several ethnically clean enclaves were established, often a smaller one within a bigger one. In such situation, the third side profited exclusively.

¹²² Something about the character of that conflict can be concluded from the Order of HVO Busovača No: 62/92 of 10.05.1992. published in H. EFENDIĆ 1998, 196-198.

¹²³ The conflict broke out on 13.6.1992., allegedly after the TO units broke into the Serb villages of Katići and Predjele, whose inhabitants of Serb nationality expressed their loyalty to HVO, and surrendered the weapons received from JNA. In the attempt of HVO to protect those Serbs, fighting broke out where there were the dead and the wounded on both sides. *War crimes of Muslim military formations against the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo 1997, 20.

¹²⁴ The alert and information centre in Novi Travnik of 20.6.1992., the report on the duty shift in the Centre OIO 19/20. 6.1992.; “The motive for the conflict was the attempt of HVO to master all the institutions and important objects in the town with the aim to realize the idea of Herzeg-Bosnia in this region, too” it was the evaluation in the official note of the Centre of Security services, Sector SDB Zenica of 27.6.1992.

¹²⁵ Croatian Defence Council, Municipality of Konjic, No: 02-938/92 of 4.7.1992., HZ H-B, a report; Croatian Defence Council, No: 03-25/92 of 12.7.1992., HZ H-B, Deterioration of relations between HVO and TO of the Municipality of Konjic.

in Kiseljak broke out. However, the special place in that first phase of Muslim-Croat intolerance has to be given to 17 August 1992, when the units of TO BH broke into a Croat settlement Stup in Sarajevo. That incident is different from the earlier conflicts which were of a local level. Due to the consequences it had suffered, the Croat community justifiably demanded to know which level it was provoked from.¹²⁶

The chronology of the conflict between HVO and ABiH, as it is known to the general public, starts with the conflict in Prozor. The conflict was preceded with the increased tensions for the most of October between HVO and TO BiH, especially in central Bosnia and Travnik. The temperature was brought to the boil by TV Sarajevo when “in their broadcast *Documents* they give the information and show an alleged massacre over members of TO in the village of Lješće, while pictures in reality showed the members of HVO units in Travnik. The massacre happened on 15.5.1992. on Vlačić, on which occasion the HVO soldiers were brutally tortured and murdered by chetniks. After that there was a shooting and an armed attack on “an officer of the headquarters of central Bosnia...and his fellow passengers” in the village of Rastovci, the municipality of Novi Travnik. In the village of Karaula members of ABiH shot at the vehicle of the HVO commander of Jajce.¹²⁷ A verbal conflict between HVO and ABiH over a petrol station in Novi Travnik, which had the local commander of ABiH allegedly utter “it’s either the petrol station or the war”¹²⁸ preceded the murder of the commander of Travnik brigade on the road Travnik-Vitez, of which HVO accused members of the 7th Muslim brigade.¹²⁹

The deterioration of the safety situation in the Operational zone Central Bosnia was reflected, on a regular basis, via Gornji Vakuf¹³⁰ on the peripheral areas of the Operational zone North-western Herzegovina, so the GS HVO was on 21 October 1992 informed that in “Gornji Vakuf and Prozor

¹²⁶ The Department of defence of HVO accused for the incident the chief of staff of GŠ OSRBiH in person. HZ H-B, HVO, Department of defence, NO: 03-34/92 of 3.9.1992., to the commander of BH Army, HVO, Department of defence, No: 03-50/92 of 11.9.1992., to the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces of BH, a protest note.

¹²⁷ The Command of OZ Central Bosnia of 15.10.1992., to the High command of ABiH.

¹²⁸ HVO, Committee for the survey of the situation in the area of the municipality of Novi Travnik, No: 1215/92 of 6.11.1992., Report on the work of the Committee.

¹²⁹ *War crimes of Muslim military formations against Croats in the central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, 1996, page 13; *HVO Bulletin*, no: 2, 13.

¹³⁰ In the military and territorial constitution of ABiH, Gornji Vakuf, as well as Bugojno, was a part of 3. corps, while these places in the system of HVO were parts of OZ North-western Herzegovina. In their conflicts, 3. corps had a significant advantage, as it had a connection, through the units of ABiH from Gornji Vakuf, with the ABiH units in Prozor and it engaged towards the hinterland of OZ Central Bosnia, interrupting its connection with OZ SZH. Such role of the units in G. Vakuf was not accidental, because, unlike ABiH Bugojno (which together with the units of HVO Bugojno were wedged between the formations of VRS from Kupres and Donji Vakuf), they had a better connection with the hinterland, as well as tactically more advantageous position. When the 305. mountain brigade, manned by Muslims from Jajce, was located in the area of Gornji Vakuf towards the end of the year, the tensions additionally rose, so it is not surprising that it was in that very area that the war between HVO and ABiH began in mid January 1993.

the situation is tense, and a conflict can break out at any moment...with respect to the new developments in a part of the operational zone, all security measures have been taken to prevent the conflict between the forces of HVO and ABiH, especially in G. Vakuf and Prozor”.¹³¹ The conflict nevertheless broke out on 23 October, and was finished with the utter defeat of the local ABiH units.

That conflict is usually held to be a start of the muslim-croat conflict, of which the Croatian army is accused and HVO. However, the disturbed safety situation and national suspiciousness dates as far back as the autumn of 1991.¹³² There is a convincing evidence that the conflict was not initiated from the strategic and operational levels of HVO. Namely, at the beginning of October 1992, HVO and Southern battlefield started the preparations for the capture of Podveležje. For the purpose of that endeavour, the Chief of Staff of the General Headquarters of HVO ordered, on 18 October 1992, the Operational zone North-eastern Herzegovina to send three 122 mm howitzers, which significantly reduced the fire power of the operational zone.¹³³ To open a new conflict in the course of the preparations for offensive operations in the region of Herzegovina is contradictory to logic in general, and especially to military logic. In the meeting of the representatives of HVO and ABiH held in Jablanica, on 6 November 1992, the representatives of ABiH agreed to the request of HVO for a replacement of their commander of the municipal headquarters of defence of Prozor¹³⁴ which is a fact that is not without significance in the considerations of the conflict.¹³⁵

In creating the picture of the Muslim-Croat conflicts and the role of Croatian army, Prozor is surely a corner stone.¹³⁶ Muslim-bosniak historiography today maintains without reserves that “the Republic of Croatia committed aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina by attacking Prozor and Novi Travnik”, and that in the attack on Prozor participated “113th Split brigade, and parts of 114th Šibenik brigade of Croatian Army. At the same time, in the attack on Novi Travnik, the other part of 114th Šibenik

¹³¹ Brigade “King Tomislav” for OZ S-ZH, Strictly confidential, NO: 47/92 of 21.10.1992., HZ HB GS HVO, regular report.

¹³² Ministry of the interior, Centre of Security Services Mostar, Station of public security Prozor of January 1992, Information on the circumstances of the law and order in the area of the municipality of Prozor in 1991.

¹³³ The howitzers were to be transported on 19 October of 1992. HVO, General Headquarters, Strictly Confidential, No: 01-2370/92 of 18.10.1992., The query of a part of the units in OZ J71 H; the Command OZ S/Z H, NO: 77/92 of 19.10.1992., to the brigade “Petar Krešimir IV” Livno, The query of a part of the units into the Operational Zone j/I H.

¹³⁴ Prior to defecting to ABiH, he was the Chief of Staff of Anti-aircraft defence in HVO. The Command OZ SZ Herzegovina, NO: 135/92 of 10.11.1992., GS HVO HZ HB, the report on order no: 01-2437/92. GS HVO.

¹³⁵ TG Konjic of 4.11.1992. GŠ VK OS RBiH, special report.; Amidža and Oganj (of 3.11.1992), GŠ OS BiH, on the activities in Herzegovina.

¹³⁶ For the “official” description of these events from the Bosnian Muslim perspective, see S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 411.

and 123rd Varaždin brigade of Croatian Army engaged”¹³⁷ The essence of this view is contained in the sentences of a legal historian, well respected among Bosniak Muslims, from 1997., which say: “The aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina was organized, planned and performed in the spring of 1992 by Serbia and Monte Negro (so called Yugoslavia), with active help from Bosnian and Herzegovinian chetniks. Towards the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993, they were joined by Croatia, too, leaning on the pro-ustasha part of the Croatian Defence Council (HVO).¹³⁸ The characteristic of this position is the intent to spread to the whole war the picture from the second half of 1993. In creating of that picture Muslim-Bosniak military elite took part as well, which, especially from the January of 1993, in each of their conflicts sees Croatian army.¹³⁹ Partly for the propaganda reasons, and partly in order to conceal the fact from the Headquarters of High Command that they were defeated by HVO.

The other major conflict happened in the January of 1993 in Gornji Vakuf after the completion of Geneva talks.¹⁴⁰ In second half of the January, it spread from Gornji Vakuf into the area of Busovača in central Bosnia.¹⁴¹

That those were conflicts over territory is most convincingly corroborated by the events around Konjic and Jablanica, which were preceded by lengthy military and political preparations, of which HVO became aware when, during and incident, it came into possession of valuable documents¹⁴², among other things, the Minutes of 20 March 1993.¹⁴³ The minutes were obviously preceded by the report of the command of the 4th corps ABiH of 13 March 1993, which was addressed directly to the president of the Presidency of R BiH,¹⁴⁴ as well as the relieving of the president of the War presidency of the Municipal Assembly of Konjic.¹⁴⁵ Those procedures were to be finished in the

¹³⁷ S. ČEKIĆ 1994, 226.

¹³⁸ Mustafa IMAMOVIĆ, “Aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and its immediate consequences”, *The Aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the struggle for its survival 1992-1995*, Sarajevo, 1997, 9.

¹³⁹ R BiH, ABiH, the command of 4th corps, strictly confidential, No. 02/4-3232/93 of 18.04.1993., to the Intelligence administration ŠVK OS RBH, Regular int. report; RBH, ABiH, the command of 4th corps, strictly confidential, No. 02/1-3200-14/93 of 19.04.1993., OC of the Headquarters of high command OS RBH, Daily operational report; S. HALILOVIĆ, 1998.

¹⁴⁰ HVO General Headquarters, No. 06-01-121/93 of 18.01.1993., OC GS HV, the report on the conflict in Gornji Vakuf.

¹⁴¹ The General Headquarters of HVO, No. 01-240 of 04.02.1993., to the Government HZ H-B, the Report for the period 14.04.1992. – 31.12.1992.

¹⁴² Brigade “Herceg Stjepan”, of 27.3.1993., the Command OZ J/I H, regular combat report for 26.3.1993.

¹⁴³ General Headquarters of HVO, VOS, Strictly confidential, No: 03-346/93 of 14.4.1993., a note made based on the original documentation which had been taken from Jasmin Guska, the chief of SJS Konjic.

¹⁴⁴ The command of 4th corps, No: 01-1880/93 of 13.3.1993.m for the attention of the president of the Presidency of R BiH. The survey of general circumstances in the responsibility zone of the 4th corps of Army of R BiH.

¹⁴⁵ The Headquarters of High Command of the Armed Forces, confidential, No. 13/37-45.

first half and mid of April 1993 with the attack on the HVO units of Jablanica and Konjic.¹⁴⁶

The events in the aftermath of that occurred with great speed, and were concentrated in central Bosnia. The events in Zenica of April 1993 are an important segment of the events and power balance. The conflicts, which were preceded by the murder of the escort of the commander of the HVO brigade "Jure Francetić", led to the attack of ABiH on HVO on 17 April, the defeat of HVO and the beginning of ethnic cleansing of the city.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, in the village of Ahmići near Vitez, the Muslim population perished, and not far from there, in the village Trusina near Konjic, its Croat inhabitants were killed on the same day. After that follow months long fighting in which HVO was "eliminated from the areas of Jablanica, Konjic, Fojnica, Kakanj, Zenica, Travnik and Bugojno".¹⁴⁸ In those conflicts, the treatment of the civilians, such as until then had been a characteristic of the engagement of the Serb forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were quite often, and those were to become a strong argument for the equalisation of Croats with the Serbs, and relativization of the war.

The description of the said conflicts, and their review has been completed based mostly on the available documents, typically of the Croatian provenance. From the meagre TO documentation, ie ABiH, a Muslim view of the issue can be seen. The interpretation of facts, passing over them in silence, exaggerations or diminishing in the original documents is all a reflection of the general state of the affairs, lack of tolerance and readiness for taking opposed opinions into consideration. Such position was unquestionably a path towards the conflict that broke out later.

The role of Croatian Army in the conflict between HVO and ABiH

There are three phases in the engagement of the Croatian army in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first is between the spring and autumn 1992, when

of 20.03.1993. Order; the Municipality of Konjic, War Presidency No. 01/1-012-106/93 of 28.03.1993., to the Constitutional Court of Republic of BiH, the request for the evaluation of the Decision of the Presidency, R BH, No 02-111-130/93 of 16.03.1993, "Herceg Stjepan" brigade, the Command, of 13.04.1993., GS HVO, Intelligence Report of 13.04.1993.; "Herceg Stjepan", GS HVO, the report for 13.04.1993.

¹⁴⁶ CV Jablanica of 12.04.1993. to the south-east zone of Mostar, a report; operational zone south-east Herzegovina, No. 01-2347/93 of 13.04.1993., the minutes; the command of the 4th corps, No. 02-2560-14/93 of 14.04.1993., OC headquarters of VK OS RBH, operational report; operational zone, south-east Herzegovina, No. 03-0366/93 of 28.04.1993., the survey of the situation.

¹⁴⁷ Barešić (son of Mate) Vinko, the commander of "Zenica brigade of HVO" of 24.3.1993., to the Department of defence of HZ H-B, The report on the organization of HVO Zenica and the events preceding its neutralization in the area of the municipality of Zenica.

¹⁴⁸ Rasim DELIĆ, *The Army as a Key to the Peace*, Military library, Sarajevo, 1994., 19. In Delić's book from 2001, that speech is dated 5 March, and not 26 February of 1994. Besides, it is different as regards certain parts and words. Rasim DELIĆ, *It is an Honour to Defend Bosnia*, The Council of Bosnian Intellectuals, Sarajevo, 2000, 251.

Croatian Army was engaged in liberating southern parts of Croatia from Metković to Konavle. The second area of a significant simultaneous engagement was in the north, in Bosnian Posavina. That attempt at protection of the western Slavonian settlements (Slavonski Brod, Nova Gradiška and Županja) ended in failure on the right bank of river Sava. At that time, a considerable help was given to BH Croats in the defence from Serb forces, so the HVO units are often joined by smaller groups of volunteers (up to 20 men).¹⁴⁹ That tendency lasted until the October of 1992, when it ends. After that, only several Croatian army officers remained serving in HVO.

The second phase is between the April of 1993 and May 1994.

The third phase is from the end of 1994 on, when the territory of the military district Tomislavgrad is used for the liberation of northern Dalmatia and the advances towards Knin. That phase ends towards the end of 1995 with the arrival of Croatian forces near Banja Luka, from where they withdraw very soon, upon the request of USA. On that quest, Croatian Army de-blockaded Bihać enclave after the three year long Serbian siege, thus preventing a possible recurrence of Srebrenica case.

However, the second phase is certainly the most problematic one, the role of Croatian Army in the Bosniak-Croat war between spring 1993 and spring 1994. The conflicts between HVO and ABiH of the spring of 1993 was first joined by a platoon of the "Zrinski" battalion. A more significant engagement starts in the beginning of July with the entry of a combat group of the 5th Guard brigade in the area of the Operational zone South-eastern Herzegovina. In that area, there would later on be a volunteer unit of the Military police, the strength of a semi-battalion (app. 2 companies). In August, the soldiers of Croatian army are directed to the Operational Zone North-Eastern Herzegovina, where they would stay until May 1994. The most widely represented unit was the 5th guard brigade, which throughout a longer period in the course of the conflict regularly had a unit in the strength of a guard battalion. As far as professional formations were concerned, the second most numerous came the 7th guard brigade with the forces the strength of a guard company. Two companies of volunteers, 90 men from the formations of the 1st and 113 men from the 2nd guard brigade, arrived, on 2 August 1993. Until 22 December of the same year their numbers fell down to 58 men from the 1st and 78 from the 2nd guard brigade. Other professional units, various special units, were mostly ranging from a platoon to a reinforced platoon. Volunteer groups from the reserve units were more numerous from the Slavonian homeguardsmen regiments, while the several reserve brigades were mostly represented by the units up to an infantry platoon. The intensity of the arrival increased in the period between August and November of 1993. At the very end of 1993, the 175th brigade was formed, mostly from deserters and obliga-

¹⁴⁹ An example: on 18 May 1992, General Headquarters of Croatian Army allows the volunteer officers of the 153rd brigade of HV to go and help the brigade "Petar Krešimir IV" from Livno. General Headquarters of HV, Cl: 8/92-01/23, No: 5120-03-92-19/1 of 18.5.1992., to the command of the 153rd brigade no, "R" of HV.

tory servicemen, from which battalions were sent in shifts to the battlefield of the military district of Tomislavgrad from end December 1993 until the May of 1994.¹⁵⁰ That was a return of the escaped obligatory servicemen, which had been common in the spring and summer of 1992, against which the Croatian Anti-War Campaign protested.¹⁵¹

A short explanation is called for with respect to the engagement of the few members of Croatian army, which were in documents mostly recorded as volunteers in BH, which is undisputable in regard to the reserve formations. The number of the engaged members of HV never exceeded the strength of JNA light brigade (1400-1800 men) with the support of the equivalent artillery battery and armoured company. They were never concentrated in a place or a direction, but they were divided in smaller groups for the purpose of "patching up" the too long defence lines. The biggest of those units deployed on a single direction of engagement was an infantry battalion. During the conflicts, only the 5th guard and 175th brigades were manned up to an approximately combat formation, and the simultaneous stay in one military district was so rare that it could be measured with a few days. An infantry battalion is in military terminology a basic joint tactical unit of infantry. It is indisputable that only tactical effects can be achieved by tactical units. Those are not the forces one would send to invade and effect a secession of another state, and especially not when they are divided into smaller groups and scattered over the broader area from Mostar to Uskoplje. Their role was principally a psychological one, and in reality it represented a symbolic support in the defence of a too long defence line which HVO with difficulties struggled to maintain, preventing ABiH (by then already a homogeneously Muslim army), in their quest of "liberation", from liberating the country from its least numerous constitutional nation.¹⁵² The constant lack of personnel at the Uskoplje-Rama battlefield is illustrated by the alarming report of the commander of ZP Tomislavgrad of

¹⁵⁰ IZM OZ S/Z H, No. 01-2916/93 of 16.07.1993., GS HVO, survey of the forces in the battlefield, CZ H. IZM Prozor. No. 01/3482/93 of 10.09.1993., Prohibition for the vehicles on the front line; ZP Tomislav Grad, Sector III, Cl. 81/93-02, No. 8233-4171-93-85 of 05.12.1993., daily combat report, ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01/5493 of 09.12.1993., GS HVO, daily combat report; ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01/5656 of 15.12.1993., GS HVO, daily combat report; ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01/5775/93 of 21.12.1993., GS HVO, summarize daily combat report; General headquarters of HVO, No. 02-2/1-02-3642/93 of 22.12.1993., GSHV; ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01/5867 of 25.12.1993., to the Chief of staff GS HVO, the report on the unit of JV; ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01/5976 of 22.12.1993., GS HVO, special report; ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01/5978 of 22.12.1993., GS HVO, Regular combat report, ZP Tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor. No. 6002 of 31.12.1993., GS HVO, regular combat report; ZP tomislav Grad, IZM Prozor, No. 01-55/94 of 05.01.1994., GS HVO. The problem of personal at the Usoplje – Rama battlefield with the situation of 05.01.1994. at 20.00 hrs.; Subcentre of SIS Rama, 02-4/2-7-41/93 of 09.01.1994., SIS Administration Mostar; General Headquarters of HVO, cl. 818-01/94-02/15, No. 02-10-06/1-94-10 of 13.04.1994., the Command of ZP Mostar, the relief of volunteers.

¹⁵¹ Croatian Anti-war Campaign of 24.7.1992., an appeal.

¹⁵² In the already mentioned speech, the first man of ABiH claimed that "HVO was militarily defeated, and by virtue of that, the very concept of HZ Herzeg-Bosnia, too, which had only

5 January 1994, in which he writes: "The whole of Uskoplje-Rama battlefield has not one available intervention soldier, apart from me".¹⁵³

"Official Croatia is from the start a participant in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the beginning it was disguised through paramilitary units of HVO and para-state Herzeg-Bosnia, and from the October 1992 on it was an open war against Bosnia and Herzegovina with all the classic elements of aggression. Croatia committed, with their armed forces and without a declaration of war, an attack on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina using their ground forces, but also air-force, and even the naval forces, because it blockaded the BH sea coast", wrote legal historian prof. Dr. Mustafa Imamović in a review of a book on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁵⁴

The claim of the attack with naval forces is absurd for several reasons. Ever since the peace of Sremski Karlovci (1699) and Požarevac (1718), the border between the Republic of Venice of those times, Turkish Empire, and the Republic of Dubrovnik was defined in Neum, which is today a border between RH and BH.¹⁵⁵ According to it, today's BH has a coastal line, but not a sea (*mare clausum*), so because of that alone it is not possible to perform a naval blockade of BH territory.

In addition, the coastal belt in Neum, also according to the judgement of the international committee of 1994-1996, whose work preceded the Contract on the implementation of the Agreement granting FBiH access to the Adriatic through RH territory (signed on 11.5.1996., published in the Official Bulletin RBiH – international contracts no: 3/96), is not fit for a port due to shallow waters.

The ethnic composition of the settlement of Neum, to whose municipality's land registry the BH coastline belongs, according to the census of 1991 was: total population 3.860, of which 3.680 Croats (95,3%), 108 Serbs (2,8%), and 72 Muslims (1,9%). It would really be interesting to find any evidence that the Republic of Croatia performed a naval blockade of the BH coast, which is inhabited by 95,3% of Croats!

Unlike his colleague Imamović, prof. Dr. sc. Vladimir Đuro Degan of the Department of International Law of the Law Faculty of Rijeka University, does not find "classic elements of aggression" in the presence of members

survived with the engagement of very significant forces of the army of the Republic of Croatia. Otherwise, they would have completely vanished from these territories. Vanished both as a political, and a military force". R. DELIĆ, 1994., 21.

¹⁵³ ZPTG IZM Prozor, No: 01-55/94 of 5.1.1994., GS HVO, The problem of personnel at the Uskoplje-Rama battlefields with the situation of 5.1.1994. at 20.00 hrs.

¹⁵⁴ S. ČEKIĆ, 1994, 411.

¹⁵⁵ Compare: Stijepo OBAD – Serđo DOKOZA – Suzana MARTINOVIĆ, *South borders of Dalmatia from the XV century until today*, Zadar: State archives in Zadar, 1999., page 104. In January 1994 and then again in July of the same year. Muslim historiographers Enver Imamović, Ibrahim Tepić and Ibrahim Bušatlija published (Military library ABiH in Sarajevo) a 40 pages brochure on the subject "Neum and Bosnian Littoral", with maps of Greater Bosnia from the age of king Tvrtko (1335-1391). The brochure was intended for the purposes of ABiH war propaganda, which explains its "scientific" value.

of Croatian army in the territory of BH, nor does he find international conflict.¹⁵⁶

Besides the members of Croatian army, the holy warriors from outside Bosnia and Herzegovina are also worth mentioning, who are deeply involved in all the events between Croats and Bosniaks. In the second half of July, more precisely 22 July 1992, the military intelligence service of HVO briefly reviewed the deteriorated political and security circumstances between HVO and TO in the area of central Bosnia. The essential problem was considered to be the existence of two commands. The report is significant because of the confirmation of the presence of mujahedins, and the fact that Zenica was the main centre of action against HVO.¹⁵⁷ Their number certainly exceeded that of the members of Croatian army who fought on HVO side between July 1993 and April 1994.

Final considerations

How to call the war in BH? In that regard, the existence of at least three views is indubitable, all of which overlap, for the most part, with the world-view, or better still, the ethnic affiliation of the authors. There have been certain departures from that principle at Croats, which is certainly worthy of special attention.¹⁵⁸ It started as Serbian aggression against Croatia, which was, in 1992, transferred directly against Croat and Muslims in BH, after the conflict between Croat and Muslims, which is the most complicated phase of the war (when it is a war of everybody against all others), and ended, ie was stopped by external factors, after the war of Croats and Muslims against the Serbs. A war is defined, or better still, is attempted to be defined starting exclusively from oneself, and one's own fate in the war. Therefore the views on war are in many respects similar, which does not mean they are accurate. For Serbs, it was a preventive war with the purpose to prevent their own experience of 1941, and a war with an objective – an attempt to create an integral Serbian state. For Croats in BH, it was a war for emancipation, with a wish to integrate with the parent country. A war in itself unquestionably has offensive elements, and all the three nations have clear views and definitions of it. For a broader environment, it was principally a civil war, which is questionable due to the different approaches to that term. BH had never been a civil state in the western European sense of the word. The war found it after emerging from 45 years' existence of a useless and harmful system, in which a strong awareness of ethnic affiliation, which made one feel different from other two nations, had nevertheless been retained with majority, despite the oppression. The fact that that division harboured a religious denomination, too, further enhanced

¹⁵⁶ Vladimir Đuro DEGAN, "Croatia was not the aggressor in BH", *Nedjeljni Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 2.9.2001., 5.

¹⁵⁷ HVO, General Headquarters, Strictly confidential, No: 07-763/92 of 22.7.1992., to the command of GS HVO, Information on the situation in the territory of central Bosnia.

¹⁵⁸ We refer to a group of dissidents from HDZ, and other critics of HDZ period and RH president Franjo Tuđman.

national homogenisation. That is why the term “civil” is questionable for the purpose of defining the conflict between those nations. The exception is certainly the Bosniak episode from western Bosnia on 1993-1995., which is undoubtedly indicative of a civil war.

Croatian politics toward BH obviously had a starting point in the assumption that BH cannot survive.¹⁵⁹ One can agree with that or not agree. The war in BH is not a finished process, and the protectorate that the international community introduced in BH, as well as the state of affairs in which BH currently finds itself, poses a well founded question how at all to call that. The views of Franjo Tuđman on Bosnia and Hercegovina were not a secret, he did not believe in its viability, which can be documented by his statements and (less reliably) by the claims of various witnesses of the history. For BH Croats, as a constitutional nation, he demanded survival and equality, which was constantly challenged and endangered, by Serbs as well by the Muslims. It is not serious to reduce the policy of the Republic of Croatia towards BH to Tuđman’s obsession with a division of Bosnia. Such an understanding of the affairs is a construct in which, for the purpose of an easier (petty-political) approach, a collective gets reduced to a prominent individual, and which is then denounced as a personal misconception of that individual or the inner circle of the ruling oligarchy. With the masses, in this particular case the Croat people of RH and BH it is more difficult, ie such considerations are avoided.¹⁶⁰

Unlike Muslims, BH Croats did not have problems defining the adversary in BH. Defining allies was more of a problem. It was the same with Muslims. The claim about Croats and Muslims being natural allies is an *a priori* view, a prejudice that keeps one’s eyes closed in the face of the events in BH of the September 1991.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Ciril Ribičić in his view of Herzeg-Bosnia thinks that “Herzeg-Bosnia... was formed on the basis of a false estimate that Bosnia and Hercegovina cannot survive the Greater-Serbian aggression, and a quiet occupation of a big part of its territory”. C. RIBIČIĆ, 2000., 25. In the context of existence of the Republic of Srpska and the international recognition (Dayton Agreement) his view as just another contribution to the fallacies about Herzeg-Bosnia.

¹⁶⁰ It is not just a Croatian specific quality. It is as present in the neighbouring SRJ and BH, as it is in the international environment. I personally consider that to be unacceptable. The individuals who surfaced in turbulent times, did so on the energy of the masses, and those anonymous masses (it is avoided to title them as a nation) cannot be granted amnesty or exclude from the consideration of the individuals who owe them their position and power. The best example is certainly the Republic of Serbska, whose political and military leaders are either fugitives, or are in The Hague (or they defend themselves from freedom), without their achievement being questioned at all.

¹⁶¹ A. Izetbegović calls RH politics towards the integral BH hypocritical. However, the question is how to call the politics of the party he was the president of? His was a politics of equidistance, inclination towards Yugoslavia (until mid 1992), flirting with JNA as the army of Bosnia and Hercegovina, ignoring Croats in BH and at the same time seeking agreement with RH. Slovene lawyer Ciril Ribičić, the son of a communist leader Mitja Ribičić, fell into the same trap, failing to understand that certain areas inhabited by BH Croats were at war with JNA since the September of 1991. C. RIBIČIĆ, 2000., 25-26.

As early as mid 1992, BH Croats managed (with the help from Croatian Army and Croatian politics) to canalise the conflict with Serbs into two battlefields, Jajce and Bosnian Posavina. At that time the political option whose fundamental objective was to annex the Croatian ethnic parts to Croatia had practically made most of their wishes come true. Only the last one remained, the formal integration. That could not be effected principally due to the existence of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, which was outside the legal system of the Republic of Croatia. From that moment on, the relations between BH Croats and the Republic of Croatia would start to feature some distance, due to the mixture of political and military circumstances. BH Croats, which is a paradox, had come into a position where they could enter without obstacles on the local levels into RH, but the factor of political environment prevented them.

At that same period in time, in central Bosnia, from June 1992 onwards, there are increased incidents with TO BH, which can be interpreted as a consequence of a consolidation (which was made possible by the Croatian military component) and an increase in defensive potential. The nature of the documents, Croat ones are nevertheless more numerous, allows the possibility of a unilateral interpretation of the events. Despite that, they are indicative of intolerance which led to a war less than a year later.

The politics of RH towards BH as a state in which one of the constitutional nations are also the Croats obviously had a desire for unification into an integral Croatian state. That is indisputable. The only disputable thing is the interpretation of the manner in which it was sought to be achieved. The prevailing opinion of a direct politics of RH towards BH, starting from the "agreement" on the division of BH between presidents Milosević and Tuđman, talks of Boban and Karadžić, and establishing of Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia with the intention of secession from BH. The stated events should be referential points in such interpretation, which is not doubted in the least in parts the circles disavouring the politics of HDZ, or Franjo Tuđman. A professional historian cannot accept such an interpretation. No evidence exists of the Karadžić-Boban talks, and both participants denied them. That, however, presents no serious obstacles for the claims such as this one: "Dr. Tuđman... met in the second half of March 1991., in the bordering area between the two republics – Karađorđevo, president of Serbia Slobodan Milošević. In that meeting, in the place that was to become a symbol of the political conspiracy against Bosnia and Herzegovina, a normalisation of Croato-Serb relations was agreed, which translated means – the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and forming a small "buffer zone" or "little land of Bosnia" between the antagonized states".¹⁶² Apart from having no foundation in arguments as far as BH is concerned, the claim is an insult to the nation the significant part of which

¹⁶² *Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosniaks in the politics and practice of Dr. Franjo Tuđman*, The Council of the Congress of the Bosniak intellectuals, Sarajevo, 1998, 7; "I do not believe in any agreement between Tuđman and Milošević, especially as it is our position that the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot happen without a bloody war. And such a war did not suit us"; it is said in the reply of then president of the Presidency SFRJ Borisav Jović to the question by the

experienced directly the consequences of “normalisation of Croato-Serb relations” in the war of 1991. The claim literally suggests that either there was no war in Croatia, or that it was not worth mentioning, since it was in the direct function of the division of Bosnia.¹⁶³ The other major point, Boban-Karadžić meeting in Graz, in May 1992, is only a confirmation of the first one.¹⁶⁴ The result was a “cessation” of hostilities between Croats and Serbs in BiH.¹⁶⁵

In the end, I would like to mention some of the characteristics of the war in the period between January 1993 and the end of 1995. The issues that need to be addressed with arguments before any “more serious” judgement are, among the rest, the following:

There are three constitutional nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What viewpoint, then, to assume towards the fact that from the very beginning of the war one of them has had an unconcealed intention to disintegrate the state. Furthermore, how to perceive the fact that, at the same time, the same is requested by two out of three, and not necessarily always the same two.¹⁶⁶

If the three constitutional nations fight against one another, what does it mean that “we justifiably pose the question of a civil war” if BH was not a civil state and, with the exception of the conflict among Muslim followers of Fikret Abdić and Alija Izetbegović in the area of Bihać, there were no hostilities between members of the same ethnic communities in BH?

In some analyses Croatia is defined as a country that committed aggression by helping HVO logistically and in personnel. In the initial period of the open war in BH, Croatia, apart from logistically supporting TO BH, allowed the forming and training the volunteer units in its own territory. To be concrete,

press concerning his knowledge of the Tuđman-Milošević Talks on the division of Bosnia. “Dr. Borislav Jović in front of the gates of the Hague”, *Globus* (Zagreb), 26.10.2001., 41-43

¹⁶³ “Since the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina could not be effected peacefully, there are indications that Milošević and Tuđman really did discuss the conditions of their later military engagement. In that sense, we can speculate on the extent of the “arranged” war, intended to strengthen the top government of the two nationally homogeneous states” writes Ivo BANAC, *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, Durieux, Zagreb, 2001, 124-125.

¹⁶⁴ In his recollections Izetbegović dates the meeting a month earlier, in the April of 1992. The question is: Is that a reflection of the importance he personally attributed to that meeting, or was it for the purposes of adjusting to the picture of the war he offered to the public? A. IZETBEGOVIĆ, 2001, 111.

¹⁶⁵ For I. Lovrenović it was a separate peace by which the western Herzegovinian district was spared from the war. Ivan LOVRENOVIĆ, *Bosnian Croats*, Durieux, Zagreb, 2002, 209; That is consistent with H. Šarinić’s claim that there was least of the war between Croats and Serbs, and that Serbs conquered, for the most part, “Muslim territories, and they did not touch Herzeg-Bosnia.” How did really Tuđman and Milošević secretly divided Bosnia”, *Globus* (Zagreb), 20.10.2000., 41.

¹⁶⁶ According to the claims of the Chief of Staff of the High Command ABiH, the president of the Presidency BH made combinations with the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the November of 1992. S. HALILOVIĆ 1998., 18-20. According to Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, A. Izetbegović accepted the idea of dividing Bosnia in 1993. “Bosniaks are prisoners of a bunch of greedy and incompetent egomaniacs”, *Liberated Bosnia*, 2.3.2000., 9.

those were the 7th Krajina brigade and 1st Krajina battalion.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the 1st volunteer regiment “Kralj Tomislav” even formally entered the ABiH, ie TO.¹⁶⁸ That means that Croatia gave military support to both Croatian and Muslim side in BH. Who, then, could Croatia commit the aggression against? Only against the self-proclaimed Republic of Srpska, which was not a subject of international law.

From the viewpoint of the Republic of Croatia, during 1991 and in the beginning of 1992, hostile engagements and aggression were launched from the territory of BH against RH. The units of TO BIH fought on the enemy side against Croatian army in Western Slavonija. By the same logic which has it that RH committed aggression against BH, it should be admitted that BH committed aggression against Croatia, from the September of 1991 until June of 1992, and that that aggression had been committed before the return Croatian aggression against BH in the spring of 1993.

From the viewpoint of Bosnian Serbs, it was an aggression of Republic of Croatia and Islamic Bosniak state against “centuries old Serb land of Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

From the viewpoint of BH Croats from 1993, it was a treason by their own fellow Croats in Croatia, who aided, equipped, and armed their adversaries, Muslim fundamentalists and jihad fanatics.

With a dose of irony we could raise the issue of Croatian aggression against BH, for instance, in the summer of 1992 during the fighting over the corridor in Bosnian Posavina, when the formations of Bosnian Serbs were reinforced by rebelled Croatian Serbs from the Republic of Serbian Krajina?

In considerations of the war in BH, it is impossible to exclude the international community. After all, it provided the starting positions of the distribution of military power, maintained the conflict with the plans of the territorial constitution of BH, and in the end stopped the war out of their own interests. By means of the Resolution 713 of the Security Council of the United Nations on the embargo on deliveries of weapons and military equipment to all the republics of SFRJ¹⁶⁹. Serbs were given an advantage which the other participants of the conflict never succeeded in catching up with. Does it imply a moral responsibility, and does it represent a direct aiding of the most heavily armed party, the Army of the Republic of Srpska? Does it mean that the World (Great powers), from the viewpoint of HVO and ABiH, acted in accord

¹⁶⁷ After gathering volunteers, on 27 June 1992, the 7th krajina bregade was formed in Klana near Rijeka, where it was trained before going to Bosnia. On 30 May 1992, the 1st krajina battalion was formed on the Zagreb fair fairground, from where it left for Travnik, “The Path of Glory and Chivalry”, *Freedom* (Travnik), 15.4.1995., 4., *Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1997., 45.

¹⁶⁸ The Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. PR. No: 1170 of 22.5.1992., A decision, Having joined the Territorial defence of BH, the regiment has been renamed into BH brigade “Kralj Tomislav”. Transcript of the document in H. EFENDIĆ. 1998., 138–140.

¹⁶⁹ *The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 1999., 381

with VRS in the war against other two constitutional nations, ie that they contributed to the definition of the war as international conflict.

Starting from the reality, ie the situation on the ground, the international community maintained the green light to accepting the borders drawn by war on the ground. It departed from that rule only in 1995 and 1996, effecting the withdrawal of Croatian Army from the area south of Banja Luka.