

Croatian Pretensions to Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1848

Abstract: Since the early 1860s many Croat politicians, both prominent (from Ante Starčević and Ante Pavelić to Franjo Tuđman) and little known, have been openly expressing the ambition to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia at a favourable moment and under certain conditions, invoking Croatian state and historical right in support of their pretensions. These pretensions, born out of the belief that the unfortunately shaped territory of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia lacks the necessary strategic depth, have led to a fully-fledged strategy for creating an ethnically and religiously pure Greater Croatia and to constant conflict with the Serb side which also lays claims, predominantly ethnic, to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords: Croatia, Greater Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, territorial pretensions, Croatian state and historical right, Serbs, Serbia, geopolitics

The alarmist thesis about the Serbs' purported hegemonic intentions and aspirations for a Greater Serbia, coming from Croatia for more than a century and a half, has been a leitmotif threaded through every anti-Serb public statement or action both at home and abroad.¹ It seeks to depict both the Serbs as a group and Serbia as territorially insatiable aggressors, while concealing own aggression and own, ethnically and historically unfounded, pretensions to someone else's territories. Although not new in Croatian politics, this tactic has not been given due attention and explanation in historiography. It is, in fact, a legacy of Austria-Hungary, whose vilification of the Serb aspiration for freedom and unification was directly proportionate to its territorial appetites in the Balkans and its growing support for the German policy of eastward expansion. Austria-Hungary invariably labelled whatever was Serbian as Greater Serbian in order to nip in the bud any attempt of the Serbs to pursue their interests, which were at variance with its own. This tradition of Austro-Hungarian politics, in which Croats participated and frequently led the way, has been perpetuated and Serbian politics denounced and invariably branded as being Greater Serbian in all historical

¹ For this see *Izvori velikosrpske agresije*, ed. B. Čović (texts by Miroslav Brandt, Bože Čović, Slaven Letica, Radovan Pavić, Zdravko Tomac, Mirko Valentić and Stanko Žuljić) (Zagreb: August Cesarec, 1991). To the same category of publications belong Mirko Grmek, Mare Djidara & Neven Šimac, *Le nettoyage ethnique. Documents historiques sur une idéologie serbe* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1993) and Stjepan Murgić, Tomislav Bogdanić & Stipan Budimir, *Kontrapunkt slobode* (Zagreb: Pisanni Nikkal, 1997).

periods since the 1848 revolution. Attacking Serbism and Greater Serbism, which they saw as the main rival to Croatism and Greater Croatism, Croat politicians were not just fantasizing about a Greater Croatia, they worked towards that end persistently and consistently, convinced that all means are permitted, including the genocidal annihilation of Serbs.

The aspiration for Croatia's territorial enlargement is of an older date. Numerically not too strong and territorially small, the Croat people harboured imperial ambitions. This can be clearly seen from the names such as "Alpine or Mountain Croats" (Slovenes); "Orthodox Croats" (Serbs); "indisputable Croats" or "the jewel of the Croat people" (Muslims); or "Turkish Croatia", "Red Croatia", "White Croatia" and "Carantanian Croatia", referring to parts of Bosnia, to Montenegro, Dalmatia and Slovenia respectively. Over time, these appellations have been carefully nurtured and planted into the minds of Croats in order to instigate their belief in the greatness of Croatia and the great numerical strength of the Croat population.

Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac warns as early as 1866 that states cannot be founded "on old title deeds and 'virtual' territorial claims"; but a policy premised on state and historical right could not be other than Greater Croatian. In 1861, the Croatian Diet invokes Croat state and historical right to raise the claim of the Triune Kingdom to a portion of the Slavic lands and to its provinces in the Ottoman Empire — i.e. to Bosnia and Herzegovina — which should be reunited with the Triune Kingdom in the process of settling the "Eastern question".² In 1878–81, the Diet hails the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and expresses hopes that conditions may be created for joining Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Triune Kingdom within the dualist Habsburg Monarchy.³ Don Mihovil Pavlinović hails the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, hopeful that these lands may soon be annexed to Croatia, and is disappointed when his hopes proved illusory.⁴ The scale of territorial ambitions premised on Croat state and historical right can be seen from the article "What is the true Croat policy and who is its proponent" published in the newspaper of the Party of Right [*Stranka prava* / SP] *Hrvatska* (no.

² *Spisi saborski i sabora kraljevinah Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije od god. 1861*, ed. and pub. by Bar. Dragojlo Kušlan and Dr. Mirko Šuhaj (Zagreb 1862), vol. II, 32–34: I 16.

³ Vladimir Čorović, "Srbi i Hrvati prema bosansko-hercegovačkom pitanju", in *Srpski pisci i naučnici o Bosni i Hercegovini*, ed. Z. Antonić (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 196 and 197; Mirjana Gross, *Izvorno pravaštvo. Ideologija, agitacija, pokret* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2000), 346.

⁴ Dragutin Pavličević, "Mihovil Pavlinović o istočnom pitanju i bosanskohercegovačkom ustanku 1860–1878", in *Mihovil Pavlinović u politici i književnosti*, ed. N. Stančić (Zagreb 1990), 201–202.

6, 1871): “The lands encompassed by the state right of the Croats, by history and by nationality, stretch: from Germany to Macedonia, from the Danube to the [Adriatic] sea, and the names of the present-day individual provinces are: Southern Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, Istria, Croatia, Slavonia, Krajina [Military Frontier], Dalmatia, Upper Albania, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Rascia, Serbia — and all these go by one true name: the State of Croatia. These lands extend over more than 4,000 square miles, and the population numbers up to 8 million souls.”

The stance held by *Hrvatska* was not lonely. It was not the product of an irresponsible journalist or politician. Nor did it reflect a passing trend. Rather, it was the natural result of a deep-rooted and widely accepted belief. As early as 1869 Eugen Kvaternik, a key figure of the Party of Right along with Ante Starčević, writes to Mihovil Pavlinović that, should their party policy be followed, should Croat state and historical right be acknowledged, then “soon the flag of pure, unspoiled Croatia will fly, not from the Drava to the sea but from the Salzburg-Tyrol Alps to Kosovo and Albania!”⁵ Kvaternik’s Greater Croatian ambitions — which covered Styria, Carniola, Gorizia and Istria, almost all of Bosnia “as far as Mt Romanija and Višegrad, and half of [H]Erzegovina, as far as the rivers Neretva and Buna” — were clearly stated in his book *La Croatie et la confédération italienne* (Paris 1859), and were the reason why his contemporary, Alexander Hilferding, a renowned Russian historian, ethnographer and linguist, levelled harsh criticisms at the book, arguing that no historical right could entitle the Croats to take the lands that were not theirs, that it would be sheer robbery inevitably pushing the kindred Slavic peoples into a conflict.

Carefully analyzing Kvaternik’s text, Hilferding comes to the conclusion that the Croats have set themselves the goal of taking control of the neighbouring areas with the assistance of Western Europe. That is why they are humble before Western Europe, and “arrogant and intolerant towards their fellow Slavs”. Hilferding advises the Croats “not to humiliate themselves before Western Europe and not to harbour arrogance and intolerance towards their fellow Slavs, but a sense of unity and love”.⁶ Hilferding’s well-intentioned message, imbued in pan-Slavic feelings, received no response from those it was addressed to.

Driven by expansionist territorial ambitions and “armed” with state and historical right, the “Croat academic youth”, behind whom stood the father of the homeland, Ante Starčević, saw not only Bosnia and Herzegov-

⁵ E. Kvaternik to M. Pavlinović, Zagreb, 22 June 1869, reproduced in V. Krestić, *Gradnja o Srbima u Hrvatskoj, 1848–1914* (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1995), vol. I, 143–144.

⁶ Hilferding’s review was originally published in the *Russkaia beseda* in 1860, and the Belgrade-based *Srbske novine* brought a translation in a separate issue.

ina as Croat lands, but also “the whole of Albania, and the whole of Rašija [Raška/Rascia], and the whole of upper Moesia or present-day Serbia”.⁷ A proponent of this policy, which Franjo Rački termed “specific Croatism”, writes that “the Croatian king is called upon to set a cross on the church of St Sophia in Constantinople”.⁸

In late 1875 Croatian university students of Starčevićan orientation, stating that Bosnia and Herzegovina are the hinterland of Dalmatia and belong among the lands of the crown of Zvonimir, publish a map titled: “Croatian state, published on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the coronation of Zvonimir, king of all Croats”. Apart from what then was the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, the map also encompasses Istria, Carinthia, Carniola, most of Styria, Bosnia and Herzegovina as far as the Drina, as well as the area that would be incorporated into Montenegro in 1878.⁹ In his geography of Bosnia published in 1878, the historian Vjekoslav Klaić, a sympathizer of the Party of Right, describes the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina as Croat, including the “Mohammedan Croats”. Referring to the “Christian Croats” (i.e. Roman Catholics) and the “Eastern-Greek Croats” (i.e. Serbs), he says that they lost their free will as a result of centuries of enslavement.¹⁰

In the book *Croat Nationality or the Soul of the Croat People* [*Hrvatska narodnost iliti duša hrvatskog naroda*] published in 1879, the well-known Croatian author Djuro Deželić, a follower of the Party of Right, states that the following provinces are inhabited by Croats and “therefore [are] Croatian: all of present-day Dalmatia with Boka Kotorska [Gulf of Kotor], the vilayet of Bosnia, i.e. Bosnia with Turkish Croatia and the Pashalik of Novi Pazar (Rascija), present-day Herzegovina, which up to the source of the Neretva was called Turkish Dalmatia as early as 1789, when Engel¹¹ was writing his history, and finally, Montenegro with Northern Albania”.¹²

The pretensions to Bosnia and Herzegovina were so strong that bishop Strossmayer wrote an embittered letter to Rački in 1878: “Our people

⁷ Arhiv Srbije [Archives of Serbia], Pokloni i otkupi [Gifts and Purchases], b. LX, no. 39, Open letter to the learned Mr Maikov, Moscow University teacher, Zagreb, 25 Jan. 1877; I. Šidak, “Prilozi povijesti ranog pravaštva”, *Historijski zbornik* XXV–XXVI (Zagreb 1972–73), 281–303.

⁸ Franjo Rački to Vatroslav Jagić, 22 Sept. 1876, in V. Jagić, *Spomeni mojega života*, vol. I (1838–1880) (Belgrade: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1930), 324.

⁹ Gross, *Izvorno pravaštvo*, 331.

¹⁰ Vjekoslav Klaić, *Bosna. Podatci o zemljopisu i povijesti* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1878).

¹¹ Historian Johann Christian Engel (1770–1814).

¹² See pp. 179 and 180 of Deželić’s book.

stare at Bosnia and Herzegovina like a stork at its egg, forgetting that our entire inner logic is against it. How can you expect to be liberated by the one who'd like to drown us in a drop of water..."¹³

Less than twenty years earlier, Strossmayer, still not disillusioned with Austria and its policy towards Croatia and Croats, seeks, in his confidential memoranda to the Austrian minister-president Count Johann Rechberg, to motivate political factors in Vienna to engage more actively in resolving the Eastern Question, suggesting that Bosnia and Herzegovina would, with the help of Croats and the Military Frontier, "fall into their hands like a ripe plum".¹⁴ The bishop's offer of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria was motivated by his wish for them to be wrested from the Ottoman Empire and annexed to Croatia when it would become possible. In 1879, he writes to Marijan Marković, bishop of Banjaluka: "What is Bosnia's is Croatia's, and what is Croatia's is Bosnia's."¹⁵ If one remembers that Strossmayer based his entire politics on Croat state and historical right, his position on the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes easy to understand.

The Greater Croatian aspirations are obvious in the programmes of the Party of Right too. The first article of the party programme adopted at the party convention held in Zagreb on 26 June 1891, and signed by Ante Starčević with his 250 followers, states: "The Party of Right will, on the grounds of state right and the nationality principle, use all legal means to have the Croat people, who lives in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, in Rijeka with the *kotar* [district] and in Medjumurje, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Istria, united into a single state body within the Habsburg Monarchy, and it will support with all its might the striving of the fellow Slovenes for the Slovenian lands to join this state body."¹⁶ The first article of the 1894 party programme states: "*Croat state and natural right must be exercised: by establishing the wholeness of the kingdom of Croatia through the unification of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Rieka, Medjumurje, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Istria, Carniola, Carinthia and Styria within the Habsburg Monarchy.*"¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ V. Krestić, "Konceptije Josipa Jurja Štrosmajera o istočnom pitanju", *Istraživanja* 5 (Novi Sad 1976), 400.

¹⁵ Ivan Mužić, *Hrvatska politika i jugoslavenska ideja* (Split 1969), 29.

¹⁶ Iso Kršnjavi, *Zapisci. Iza kulisa hrvatske politike* (Zagreb 1986), vol. II, 462.

¹⁷ Dr Sime Mazzura & Dr Marijan Derenčin, *Programi oporbenih stranaka u Hrvatskoj* (reproduced from the *Obzor*) (Zagreb 1894), 12 (italics mine). August Harambašić, a noted Croat poet and prominent member of the Party of Right, in a speech he gave in 1890, expected the cheer "Long live Croatia!" would resound from Triglav to the Timok, and from the Soča to the Balkans.

The formulation “establishing the wholeness of the kingdom of Croatia” and uniting it with the cited regions implies that these regions used to be united at some point in the past. However, the desire to create a Greater Croatia led the Party of Rights to falsify the past, and not only in this programme but also in a number of other cases. Croatian territorial claims covered three categories of lands. One encompassed those that constituted the “real extent”, or what then was Croatia and Slavonia with the city of Rijeka and its environs; a second encompassed the lands claimed on the grounds of the so-called virtual right: Medjumurje, Dalmatia, the Kvarner Islands, a part of Istria, and parts of north-eastern Bosnia; while a third encompassed the lands that Greater Croatian circles wished to see as part of Croatia on the grounds of “Croat state and historical right”. The 1894 programme of the Party of Right included Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, even though they had never formed part of Croatia. Anyway, in the second half of the nineteenth century the project for the phased creation of a Greater Croatia was fully developed, so that in the subsequent decades, strategies and tactics for achieving the objective needed only to be elaborated and supplemented.

In late 1902 the well-known Croatian politician, jurist and author Marijan Derenčin, advocating the expansion of Croatia, is ready to declare the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while generously acknowledging Serbia’s right to expand towards the south.¹⁸

In early 1908, Iso Kršnjavi, a prominent member of the Pure Party of Right [*Čista stranka prava* / ČSP], makes a suggestion to Zanantoni, chief of staff to the Zagreb-stationed corps, that “for the dynasty and monarchy to forever have an unconditionally reliable and safe stronghold in all directions, towards the inside and towards the outside, Bosnia and Herzegovina should be united into a single state body with Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, and placed under the administration of an absolutely reliable person who would carry out Bosnia’s transition to a constitutional system in a way similar to how Count Pejačević, as ban and commissioner, annexed the Military Frontier of Croatia back in his time”.¹⁹ As for Kršnjavi, he believes that the Greater Croatia idea is nothing other than “a bit shrunken Yugoslav

¹⁸ Iso Kršnjavi (*Zapisci*, 234–235) reacted in the following way: “So, the merryman [Derenčin] is giving us Bosnia, plus the right to expand westwards. We haven’t even fully digested the Military Frontier yet, and the Serbs who came with it, so what would we do with the Serbs in Bosnia? ‘Septemvirize’ them too? Bosnia hasn’t been formally ceded to our monarchy yet, there the sultan is sovereign. How has Dr. Derenčin come to appropriate someone else’s property? — He’d say: Sultan, so what! Bosnia’s ours!”

¹⁹ Kršnjavi, *Zapisci*, 510.

idea” which is easier to fulfil than the ambitious Yugoslav idea.²⁰ In 1909, to smooth the way for Croatia to take hold of Bosnia, he suggests that Josip Stadler, archbishop of Vrhbosna seated at Sarajevo, should assume the office of bishop of Djakovo so that the “unity of the clergy in Bosnia” may be achieved. He argues that Croats need Bosnians because the latter are hardy, honest and reliable. From his perspective: “Anti-Serbism is here what anti-Semitism is elsewhere. Self-defence!”²¹

During the crisis caused by the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Josip Frank, the leader of the Pure Party of Right, advocates the reorganization of the Habsburg Monarchy in the trialist mode, with Croatia enlarged with Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Greater Croatia, constituting its third entity.²² He hails the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, believing that it forestalls the possibility of their being annexed by Serbia and paves the way for reshaping the Monarchy and for achieving his party objective, that of unification of Croatia and Dalmatia with Bosnia and Herzegovina.²³ Frank begins to muster volunteers for the so-called Croatian People’s Legion [*Hrvatska narodna legija*], which would repel Serbia’s regular and paramilitary units allegedly planning to make incursions into Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁴ Some of the Muslim members of Frank’s party show readiness to shed their blood for the cause of “unification of all Croatian lands”. At a conference held in Zagreb in November 1908, it could be heard that “thousands of Croatian Muslims [are ready] to rush to the Drina under the Croatian flag to defend the Croatian holies and the legacy of their ancestors”.²⁵ At the same time, the Committee of the religious and cultural Croat People’s Union [*Hrvatska narodna zajednica* / HDZ] draws up a programme known as “Points”, explicitly stating that “Bosnia and Herzegovina are Croatian lands in ethnic and state right terms”, and that “the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Croats naturally aspire to unite Bosnia and Herze-

²⁰ Ibid. vol. I, 212.

²¹ Ibid. vol. II, 504, 568 and 587.

²² Marko Trogrlić, “Hrvatska i ‘Hrvatsko pitanje’ u korespondenciji Franka i Moritza von Auffenberg-Komárova (1908.–1910.)”, in *Pravaška misao i politika* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2007), 168, 171–174. As early as 1890 Frank, in a speech he gave at the party club, advocated the unification of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, the “Croatian parts” Styria, Carinthia and Carniola, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Frank saw them united into a state within a federally organized, i.e. trialist monarchy.

²³ Zlatko Hasanbegović, “Islam i muslimani u pravaškoj ideologiji: o pokušaju gradnje ‘pravaške’ džamije u Zagrebu 1908”, in *Pravaška misao i politika*, 93.

²⁴ On Frank’s mustering of volunteers to be used as a tool for Croatia to grab hold of Bosnia and Herzegovina, see Kršnjavi, *Zapisci*, vol. II, 546–547 and 558.

²⁵ Ibid.

govina with Croatia, within the Habsburg Monarchy”.²⁶ The Croat Catholic Association [*Hrvatska katolička udruga*], founded in 1910, also adopts as one of its goals the article from the programme of the Party of Right relating to the unification of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia.²⁷ The main promoter of Frank’s version of Rightism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially during the First World War, Josip Stadler, archbishop of Vrhbosna, advocates the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia.²⁸

There have been all sorts of justifications — historical, natural, ethnic, geographic, economic, geopolitical etc. — for each object of Croatian territorial hunger (such as, say, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina, parts of Slovenia, Montenegro), and a smoothly working mechanism developed in their support. Every pretension or claim by others on what they staked a claim themselves was fiercely criticized and condemned; a method which has been in use since the mid-nineteenth century is the demonization of the Serbs: the Serbs are described as a people of villains and brigands, byzantinely cunning, primitive and devious; they are Šumadijan [central Serbian] bandits and chetniks. Croats, on the other hand, are a cultured, humane and peace-loving people; the territories they claim belong to them on various grounds, whereas Serbs wish to seize them without any grounds, for the simple reason that they are marauders, a disruptive factor, a source of crises, unrests and wars.²⁹ With amazing persistence, using proven methods, unchallenged or even aided by Belgrade’s short-sighted policies, they raised their Greater Croatian pretensions to the rank of a justified and legitimate right. Once this was accomplished, they did not even try to conceal the readiness to achieve their national and state demands at all costs, even by brutal force.³⁰ The Serbs failed to work out an appropriate response to such

²⁶ Zlatko Matijević, “Politika i sudbina: dr. Ivo Pilar i njegova borba za samostojnost hrvatskog naroda”, in *Pravaška misao i politika*, 216.

²⁷ Zoran Grijak, “Doprinos vrhbosanskog nadbiskupa dr. Josipa Stadlera djelovanju Stranke prava u Bosni i Hercegovini tijekom Prvoga svjetskog rata”, in *Pravaška misao i politika*, 181–182.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 188 ff.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. L. V. Südländ, *Južnoslavensko pitanje* (Zagreb 1943), 383; Dr Ante Pavelić, *Putem Hrvatskog Državnog prava* (Buenos Aires — Madrid 1977), 486; Petar Vučić, *Politička sudbina Hrvatske. Geopolitičke i geostrateške karakteristike Hrvatske* (Zagreb 1995), 156.

³⁰ As early as 1911, the Starčevićan youth emphasized, in article 7 of its Young Croat Programme (*Riječ mlade Hrvatske, Hrvatskom djaštvu i svemu narodu posvećuje Starčevićanska mladost* [Zagreb 1911], 4; italics mine): “Young Croats, as the staunchest champion of radical Greater Croatian propaganda, which will encompass all Croat lands mentioned in the political programme, as well as all Croat settlements, will mostly

a challenge. Enthusiastic about the Yugoslav idea, genuine and gullible proponents of brotherhood and unity, they were always a step behind.

The newspaper of the Croat community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Hrvatski dnevnik* (Croat Journal), which held a purely racial stance on territorial issues, brought a series of articles about the affiliation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The articles were assembled in a booklet titled *Croatian Bosnia (Us and "them over there")* [*Hrvatska Bosna (Mi i "oni tamo")*] published in Sarajevo in 1907. The opening pages of this toxically Frankist-clericalist [*franko-furtimaši*] reading state:

A whole series of features of Bosnia's geographic, ethnographic and historical situation clearly mark its political position in relation to the monarchy, and the political symbolism of Croatia in Bosnia even more clearly. It represents a link between the monarchy and Bosnia which may have given in the most difficult historical disasters but has never broken. It represents the ethnic link between the territory where the Croat tribe founded its true if still small state with present-day Croatia; it represents the link which entitles our king, in state-right terms, to feel a ruler and not a mandatary in Bosnia, briefly: only Croatia, be it of the Christian or Islamic faith, is the element entitled to span the gap that there is between Europe and the Balkans.

This feeling is seething and living inside each of us, clearly setting us our task in the course of historical and cultural development: *first and foremost to bring Bosnia closer to Croatia, to pave the way to the monarchy and into the heart of Europe, the way which, wherever to you may go from Bosnia, leads only via Croatia. In that way Croatia will resurrect again, because the link of blood is the link stronger than steel!*

That we shall have to fight along the way is known to all: *here we are, fighting for a long time the eternal battle against the elements which gravitate towards the other side of the fatal gap described above, which are being driven out of the union with the monarchy by some irresistible centrifugal force, which only yesterday met the authorities under the mask of loyalty, and today are weaving webs and throwing them across the Drina, which call us, Croats, their brothers so that they can, in the brotherly embrace, take away our historical rights and our nationality, and sell them — at Terazije [centre of Belgrade]!*

But we are still on this side of the divide, and they over there will stay on the other! [pp. 5–6; italics mine]

This is the kind of feeling that Greater Croatian circles were imbued with. What relations were supposed to be like in the big country longed for and fantasized about for centuries can be seen from the newspaper *Hrvatsstvo* [Croatdom]. The first issue, released in Zagreb on 2 May 1904, brings,

rely on oral agitation and the press, as well as the founding of cultural institutions, *without refraining from other means in extreme cases*".

among other things, the following: “We shall fight for the independence of the Roman Catholic Church, for its rights and institutions, against every attack, wherever it may come from. Our task will be [to ensure] that our entire public social life is revived and reborn in Jesus Christ [...] We shall strive to ensure, through constitutional means, the organic extension of Croat state right [...] In the Croat lands, we recognize only one political people: *Croat*, only one flag: *Croat*, only one official language: *Croat*.”

Fiercely attacking the Croats willing to team up with Serbs, *Hrvatstvo* wrote:

Here, Christ, there, the Antichrist. Here, pure and glorious Croatdom under the Croat flag, there, a chaos of mindless principles and a muddle of various flags. Here, pride, inherited from the ancient Croats, who would not cede an inch of their land without bloodshed, and there, people who are giving Croat lands dewed with Croat blood away like old rags, all in the name of some ostensible concord, to those who would rather have their right hand cut off than hear of any concord with their brother. Some brotherhood indeed!

The gap between Serbs and Croats will grow deeper because of us! That is what you are telling us too.

And who has ever spanned that gap? You? When and where? You’ve had plenty of time! So, where is that concord? The kind of concord some Serbs want to strike with you is the kind every ox can strike with its butcher. All it has to do is lay its head under his axe. We simply don’t need that kind of concord, because we’d cease being what we are and what we want to be — Croats [...] as for their [Serb] political usurpations, we cannot get along with them until they acknowledge to the Croat lands that which belongs to them according to the compromise [of 1868]: one Croat flag, one Croat language, in a word, *one political people, Croat*.”

Even towards the very end of the First World War, when it was obvious that the Central Powers were defeated and the Habsburg Monarchy on the brink of disintegration, hopes that a Greater Croatia was possible were not given up, as evidenced by a note that Iso Kršnjavi wrote down on 25 October 1918: “I’ve spoken with the government secretary Andres³¹ today, and he says there’s been word in government circles that an imperial manifesto recognizing a free greater Croatian state is going to be announced tomorrow. This state will encompass Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia with Rijeka, and Medjimurje, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Perhaps Istria too. And the emperor will allegedly visit Zagreb a few days later.”³²

³¹ Ivan Andres (1883–1959), a politician, lawyer and legal writer.

³² Kršnjavi, *Zapisci*, vol. II, 806.

Several prominent Croat politicians, besides those already mentioned, openly expressed the intention to have Bosnia and Herzegovina annexed to Croatia. For example, Stjepan Radić, having fled the country, had a written proposal stating the “demands of Croats vis-a-vis Serbs” delivered to a Briton. The proposal envisaged “full independence of Croatia (Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia) in a *confederation* with Serbia on the basis of the Entente through an accord which would leave up to Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bačka, Banat, Montenegro and Macedonia to decide freely by plebiscite if they wish to remain tied to militarist and centralist Serbia or enter a *federation* with peaceful and neutral Croatia”.³³ At about the same time (on 23 September 1923) Radić, still in London, asks of the Presidency of the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (*Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka* / HRSS) to have the *Map: Croatia and Croats* drawn up. Besides Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Medjumurje, Prekomurje “with Krka and Kastav”, the map was supposed to contain all former Austro-Hungarian lands: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bačka, Banat and Baranja, and even Montenegro and Macedonia. In his instructions for drawing up this map, which was obviously intended mostly for foreigners because it was to have annotations in French or English, Radić stresses: “In the area from Subotica to the Adriatic Sea, all districts where Croats account for more than 50% of the population are to be marked in (in Bosnia, Muslim and Catholic Croats are, naturally, counted together) blue shades, and the Orthodox in red.”³⁴

By turning to the British and having the *Map* drawn, Radić obviously wanted to internationalize the Croat question. His written proposal depicts Serbia in dark colours as a militarist and centralist country which lacks democratic liberties and rights, a country with which a country as freedom- and peace-loving as Croatia cannot live in a state union. Presenting Serbia as inept and incapable of keeping all the listed provinces together, he recommends Croatia as the focal point around which these provinces — Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bačka, Banat, Montenegro and Macedonia — could gather on a federal basis. This appears to have been an overt attempt to break up the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and instead to lay down the foundations of the long-yearned-for Greater Croatia of which the Greater-Croatian ideologist Eugen Kvaternik had dreamt and written, the one “not from the Drava to the sea but from the Salzburg-Tyrol Alps to Kosovo and Albania”. That the latter conclusion is not far-fetched may be seen from a report of the British minister in Belgrade and his remark that there is in the mind of the “pan-Croat” a vision of a “powerful province”

³³ Djordje Dj. Stanković, *Pašić i Hrvati, 1918–1923* (Belgrade 1995), 310.

³⁴ The original letter was in the possession of the late Dr Aleksandar Vlaškalić, through whose courtesy it was made available to me.

centred on Zagreb, which would consist of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, a good part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Baranja, and a part of Bačka.³⁵ While making drafts of a new party programme (1925), Radić also intended to change the boundaries of Bosnia in such a way that the Bosnian Sava Valley (*Posavina*) was annexed to Croatia. According to this project, the Gulf of Kotor (*Boka Kotorska*) would be detached from Croatia, but Croatia would be given parts of Herzegovina in return.³⁶

After the end of the war in 1918, Ante Pavelić also frequently reverts to the question of Croatia's territorial extent. The programme of the Party of Right of 1 March 1919, behind which stood Pavelić, stresses that the party will use "all legal means to ensure that all Croat lands (Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Rijeka with the *kotar*, Medjumurje, Prekomurje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Istria with the islands) are united, on the basis of Croatian state right and the right to national self-determination, into one independent Croatian state."³⁷ In the Pro-memoria he submitted in 1927 to Roberto Forges Davanzati, a member of the Grand Council of Fascism, Bosnia and Herzegovina are incorporated into Croatia. The Pro-memoria on Consultations Held in Budapest on 31 October 1927 states that the "Croatian state encompasses Croatia with Medjumurje, Slavonia with Sylvania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Dalmatia". The draft pro-memoria of September 1928, which was supposed to be signed by representatives "of the Royal Italian government and the Croat people", and which called for constituting a Croat state, states that the latter will be composed of "Croatia and Slavonia, Medjumurje, Dalmatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina". In article 2, the Italian government is called upon to acknowledge Croatia and Slavonia with Medjumurje, Dalmatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as being "historically Croat lands, and to support and help in every way the aspiration of the Croat people for the creation of an independent state". Pavelić sees Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of Croatia in some of his published writings as well, such as *Die kroatischen Länder und ihre Bevölkerung* (1931), or *Die kroatische Frage* (1936). In the former case, this Croatia of his had an area of 107,753 km², and in the latter about 107,000 km².³⁸

³⁵ Živko Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: godišnji izvještaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938*, vol. I: 1921–1930 (Belgrade — Zagreb 1986), 44; Sofija Božić, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj 1918–1929* (Belgrade 2008), 45.

³⁶ "Zabilješka Marije Radić", Zagreb, 23 March 1925, Bogdan Krizman, *Korespondencija Stjepana Radića 1919–1929* (Zagreb 1973), vol. II, 604–605.

³⁷ Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret od nastanka do travnja 1941. godine* (Zagreb 2006), 165.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 169.

In discussing the territorial extent of the Croatian state, Pavelić and his Ustasha followers invariably emphasize the Croat state and historical right to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croatia they envisage always stretches east to the Drina. Characteristic in that respect is Pavelić's article "Bosnia is ours" published in 1932. Among other things, it says the following: "as far as Bosnia and Herzegovina is concerned, let Belgrade know [...] that these are ancient Croat lands [...] and that the Croat people will never let our lands be severed from the motherland, Croatia, that we shall all die rather than let the greater-Serbian moloch swallow them. Let Belgrade not forget that ancient Duvno Field [*Duvanjsko polje*] is in Bosnia, let it not forget that there is in Bosnia and Herzegovina a Croat Catholic-Muslim majority [...] and let Belgrade know that the whole of Croatia will fight to the last drop of blood for these lands of theirs, that they will surely cut off those covetous Belgrade hands that are reaching out for this Croatian jewel... Bosnia is Croatian and we will never give it up."³⁹ In the pro-Ustasha press and books legally published in the late 1930s and early 1940s Bosnia and Herzegovina are openly referred to as a Croatian territory.⁴⁰ The map on the front page of the monthly *Ustaša* for July 1930 shows Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of a Greater Croatia. A comparable example can be found in Pavelić's book published two years later,⁴¹ which contains a map titled *La Croatie et les Pays danubiens*. Bosnia and Herzegovina are also shown as part of Croatia in a map on the front page of *Hrvatski domobran* (Croat Home Defender) for 1933, and on a postage stamp issued by the Main Ustasha Headquarters in Italy in 1934. The whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina is featured as part of Croatia in the map titled "Croats in Historic Croatia (according to the 1931 population census)" in Mladen Lorković's book *Narod i zemlja Hrvata* (The Croat People and Land), published in Zagreb in 1939. Especially relevant to understanding the scale of Greater-Croatian ambitions is a leaflet, illegally printed in 1940, which contains a map of all areas which were supposed to be incorporated into the Independent State of Croatia: in addition to Croatia and Dalmatia, these were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Sandžak, Slovenia, Sylvania, Baranja and Bačka.⁴²

Vladko Maček, the successor of Stjepan Radić, continued to pursue his predecessor's Greater-Croatian policy. Even before Radić's death (1928), in a speech he gave in 1923, he states that the "Croatian idea has spread [...] from the Mura to Montenegro, from the Adriatic Sea to Zemun", and that

³⁹ Ibid. 169 (italics mine).

⁴⁰ Ibid. 179.

⁴¹ Ante Pavelić, *La restauration économique des pays danubiens. Le désarmement. Belgrade et Croatie* (Geneva: Edition de la correspondance croate Grič, 1932).

⁴² Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret*, 168–183.

now Bosnia too “has joined Croatian Dalmatia, which has for centuries wished to get in with her sister, Croatia”.⁴³ His goal is a state composed of all former Austro-Hungarian South-Slavic provinces under Croatian leadership and, possibly, tied to Serbia in the form of an “association of interests”. Like Radić, he also advocates some form of plebiscite, motivated by the wish to divide the Kingdom of Yugoslavia into two parts, with the Drina as the boundary between them. According to a statement he made in 1936, each province: “Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, even Dalmatia, may choose as they wish, i.e. as their representatives, elected in an election for a constituent assembly, should decide. In other words: if Vojvodina wants [to come together] with Serbia — fine, *if it wants* [to be] *out of it, fine*, if it wants *with Croatia, together* or separately, it’s fine again...”

A testimony to Maček’s growing territorial appetites has been left by Jovan Jovanović Pižon, leader of the Agrarian Party, who wrote down what Prince Paul Karadjordjević had told him. At a meeting between the Prince and Maček held before the Cvetković-Maček Agreement (1939), the Prince asked, “What do you think Croatia is?”, and Maček replied, “The banovinas of Primorje [Coast] and Sava.” At another meeting, Maček claimed Dubrovnik, and then Vrbas Banovina (with a ninety-percent Serb population). At a third meeting, Maček laid claim to Sylvania as far as Ilok, Brčko with its environs, Bijeljina, Travnik, Fojnica, and Herzegovina.⁴⁴

Even after the Cvetković-Maček Agreement of August 1939 created Banovina Croatia, ceding to it parts of western Bosnia (previously within Vrbas Banovina), Maček was not satisfied with the territorial extent of the new Banovina. He thought of the agreement as being “incomplete” and containing a number of debatable issues, notably territorial. Since, as he put it, the agreement “has not definitively settled the Croatian territorial question”, a provision was included that the definitive extent of Banovina Croatia will be determined at the reorganization of the state union. “And this is only natural,” Maček stressed, “because the territory of Banovina Croatia will look completely different depending on whether the reorganized state union includes, say, an autonomous Vojvodina or not, an autonomous Bosnia or not, etc.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Božidar Murgjić, *Dr Vladko Maček — vodja Hrvata* (Zagreb n.d.), 34. Given this viewpoint of Maček, S. Božić, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj*, 49, rightly concludes that his idea of the borders of Greater Croatia was not in any way different from the borders proposed at the First Croatian Catholic Congress held in Zagreb in 1900.

⁴⁴ Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia], J. Jovanović Papers, Notes of Jovan Jovanović Pižon, Note of 26 March 1939.

⁴⁵ Ranko Končar, *Opozicione partije i autonomija Vojvodine 1929–1941* (Novi Sad 1995), 339.

The aspiration to expand Croatia to the greatest extent possible continued at the time of the Independent State of Croatia [*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska/NDH*] as well. Dissatisfied with its size, the Ustasha establishment sought to enlarge it through the mediation of Slavko Kvaternik, Pavelić's deputy. In a telegram of 14 May 1941, the German minister in Zagreb Siegfried Kasche conveyed to his Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kvaternik's request to expand "Croat" territories to the Albanian border, including the towns of Priboj, Prijepolje and Pljevlja. Kasche supported the request, arguing that "Croat troops have already been stationed there". However, Italy objected. Count Ciano described the request as "Croat imperialism", and in the diary entry of 30 June 1941, wrote: "Now Pavelić would like to have the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. An absurd, groundless demand. I've prepared a letter of rejection signed by the Duce."⁴⁶

According to a book on the activity of the German Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst/BND*), one of the key figures in the Yugoslav communist establishment, Ivan Stevo Krajačić, drew up, and at the time Josip Broz's unlimited power was in full swing, a plan for creating "sovereign Croatia with Bosnia and Herzegovina" with borders matching those of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941.⁴⁷ This may be seen as yet another proof of consistency in Greater-Croatian aspirations, especially those relating to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political systems, state frames, forms of government and political leaders have been changing, but not the policy intent on drawing Croatia's border along the Drina.

The geopolitical position of Croatia is involved in many issues that burdened, and continue to burden, Croato-Serbian relations. According to the generally held opinion of leading Croat politicians and geopoliticians, past and present, Croatia resembles a banana, a crescent or, as the well-known Croat historian Vjekoslav Klaić described it, a "sausage [its ends] well straddled apart". In early 1909, hopeful to change it, Klaić develops a political programme according to which "Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Istria and the islands should unite", forming an entity in which Croats would constitute a majority, and they should join Austria.⁴⁸ A banana-shaped Croatia, in the view of practically all politically thinking Croats, has no chance of survival and progress. Antun Radić explains that "Dalmatia united with Croatia would look like crusts of a bread loaf, and the inside you'd scoop out would be Bosnia and Herzegovina hollowed out of the

⁴⁶ Smilja Avramov, *Genocid u Jugoslaviji u svetlosti medjunarodnog prava* (Belgrade 1992), 265.

⁴⁷ Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, *Der Schattenkrieger* (Dusseldorf 1955), 213; Smilja Avramov, *Postherojski rat zapada protiv Jugoslavije* (Novi Sad 1997), 193–194.

⁴⁸ Kršnjavi, *Zapisci*, vol. II, 561.

Croatian bread [...] and if we want to be fully fed, we need the inside, we need Herzeg-Bosnia”.⁴⁹ For Antun’s brother, Stjepan Radić, Bosnia is “like the bowels of the rest of Croatia. Well, take out a man’s bowels and tell him to live”. In the view of Frano Supilo: “Croatia without Bosnia will always be a toy in the hands of whoever rules the presently-occupied provinces [Bosnia and Herzegovina]”.⁵⁰ Croat politicians believed that for economic and financial independence to become permanent takes achieving new territories. *Hrvatski dnevnik* wrote in 1940: “Croatia in its present-day extent cannot last in permanence, for it needs some more parts for its own economic development.”⁵¹

According to the most prominent and most highly esteemed Croat geopolitician of the interwar period, Ivo Pilar (who also wrote under pseudonyms L. v. Südland, Dr. Jurčić and Florian Lichtträger), “from the geopolitical perspective, the triune [kingdom] has no chance of surviving in national-political and economic-political terms without Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁵² Pilar’s view expressed in the book *The South-Slav Question*, which saw four editions within a few decades, two in German and two in Croatian, was that “Croatia and Slavonia separated from Bosnia and Dalmatia, their natural constituent parts, are a torso unable to survive”.⁵³ In a booklet which considers the course the Croat people should take even before the end of the Great War, published in 1915 and republished in 1917, Pilar let it be known in no vague terms what the strategic goal of the Croats is and has to be: “The Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia with its long and narrow territory of very small depth, which stretches in two directions (Dalmatia, at places, only a few kilometres [deep]), are not at all able on their own to be the scene of any state and political creation and, in this form, have no future whatsoever as a national-political body. This realization was, in our view, the cause of that frantic quest for a broader framework for our national development before the year 1878; it was the cause behind the emergence of Illyrianism and Yugoslavism. The Triune Kingdom will have the basic requisites for existence only with Bosnia and Herzegovina joined to it. The Croat people in the Triune Kingdom itself has little prospect of

⁴⁹ *Dom* no. 7, 4 April 1901.

⁵⁰ Frano Supilo, *Politički spisi: članci, govori, pisma, memorandumima*, ed. D. Sević (Zagreb: Znanje, 1970), 179.

⁵¹ *Hrvatski dnevnik* no. 1346, 30 January 1940.

⁵² Dr. Ivo Pilar, *Politički zemljopis hrvatskih zemalja: geopolitička studija* (Sarajevo 1918), 21.

⁵³ L. v. Südland, *Die südslavische Frage und der Weltkrieg. Übersichtliche Darstellung des Gesamt-Problems* (Vienna 1918), quoted after the translated edition: *Južnoslavensko pitanje: prikaz cjelokupnog pitanja* (Zagreb 1943), 391.

survival, and Bosnia and Herzegovina emerge as an essential requisite for the national survival and political development of the Croat people. Limited to the Triune Kingdom alone, the Croat people can only survive; it will be able to live only if it has Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁵⁴ In Pilar’s view, Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia are the shell, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the core of Croatia.⁵⁵

A statement Pilar made in a conversation with Iso Kršnjavi, occasioned on 1 June 1918 by Pilar’s intention to found, with the archbishop Stadler, a new Croatian party in parallel with the Pure Party of Right, may provide some insight into him as a person and politician, and into his views of Serbs: “Serbs ought not rule, they should be treated as a subordinate nationality.”⁵⁶

In line with the shell-and-core view illustrated above, the fourth volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* published in 1960 by the Zagreb-based Lexicographical Institute of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, under the direction of Miroslav Krleža, contained the entry on Croatia which was accompanied by a map of this republic with the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, all the way to the Drina, joined to it. The map accompanying the text on Serbia in the seventh volume of the *Encyclopaedia* released in 1968 followed a different approach. Serbia was halted at the Drina, barely allowed to cross to the left bank of the river. In this, as in many other cases, Croatian geopolitical mania for Bosnia and Herzegovina came to the surface.

What the Lexicographical Institute did in the 1960s was neither new nor unusual when it comes to Croatian territorial pretensions towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. The tradition is more than a century old. As early as 1862, Josip Partaš prepared a geographic map according to a draft made by Franjo Kužić, titled “Historic map of the whole of the *Kingdom of Croatia with boundaries of the now existing provinces and major ancient and more recent places*”.⁵⁷ The map shows Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, southwestern parts of Serbia and south-eastern parts of Slovenia as lands of the Kingdom of Croatia.

At this point, it should be remembered that the First Croatian Catholic Congress held in Zagreb in 1900 produced a map showing the eastern

⁵⁴ Dr. Juričić, *Svjetski rat i Hrvati. Pokus orijentacije hrvatskoga naroda još prije svršetka rata* (Zagreb 1915; and 1917), 65.

⁵⁵ Pilar, *Politički zemljopis*, 26.

⁵⁶ Kršnjavi, *Zapisci*, 796.

⁵⁷ *Historički zemljovid cijelokupne Kraljevine Hrvatske sa označenjem granicah sada obstojećih pokrajinah i navedenjem znamenitijih starijih i novijih mijestah*, printed in Zagreb by the well-known printing house of Dragutin Albrecht.

border of Greater Croatia stretching from Kotor on the Adriatic coast to Zemun at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers: Croat historians “rolled up their sleeves” and got down to proving that the entire area “has been a Croat ethnic space in history”.⁵⁸

As much in keeping with the Greater Croatian aspiration to have Croatia’s eastern border on the Drina is an ethnographic map prepared by Nikola Zvonimir Bjelovučić in 1933, and published in his little book *The Ethnographic Boundaries of Croats and Slovenes* released in Dubrovnik in 1934. With its by no means small territorial enlargement, this map, titled “Ethnographic boundaries of Croats in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and adjacent countries”, irresistibly resembles the Independent State of Croatia under Ante Pavelić. This Croatia incorporates all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gulf of Kotor and the Adriatic coast further south to Bar, western parts of Bačka, the Baja area in Hungary, parts of Hungary southeast of Pecs, a long tract of land along the left bank of the Drava from Sveti Martin in the east to Donja Lendava in the west, and all of Syrmia. Deliberately a broad-brush and imprecise depiction, Bjelovučić’s map was an expression of Greater Croatian territorial pretensions rather than a faithful reflection of the actual ethnic proportions. It encompassed all lands which were seen as belonging to Croatia by state and historical right. Ethnography was a pretext for making a public statement of Greater Croatian political goals in a blurred way.

With this summary overview of the subject which could otherwise be extensively discussed, even readers unfamiliar with the Greater Croatian ambitions harboured by earlier generations will not find it difficult to identify the sources and inspiration of the modern-day Croat politicians who believe that Croatia should be defended on the Drina (such as, for example, the late Dalibor Brozović, member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences, or Franjo Tuđman). They invoke Croatian state and historical right to claim, say, the Gulf of Kotor or Bačka, while at the same time wishing to preserve the internal boundaries between the federal units of the former Yugoslavia, popularly known as “AVNOJ boundaries”.

The answer to the central issue in relations between Croats and Serbs, as well as the causes of their occasional conflicts and, eventually, a war reside in the programme of the ideological predecessors of Pavelić’s Ustasha — the former Party of Right and the Frankists-clericalists — which championed a single flag, Croat, and a single political people, Croat, in one large Croat state.

Croatian politics was steeped in the ideas of Ivo Pilar, constituting the basis for its geostrategic goals and the national idea. Pilar’s geopolitical

⁵⁸ Milorad Ekmečić, *Srbija između srednje Evrope i Evrope* (Belgrade 1992), 98.

views and Greater Croatian aspirations found a consistent follower in the historical work of Dominik Mandić, whose attention was also focused on Bosnia seen as a Croatian land: “With its mountainous ranges, river routes and its entire geopolitical strength, B[osnia] and H[erzegovina] continue, fill up and territorially connect the northern, Pannonian, Croat lands with the southern, Adriatic, lands. Without B and H, Croat lands would be left torn apart, lacking natural communications and territorial wholeness. The river Drina with its deep bed and the surrounding high mountains closes up the Croat lands and separates them from the Serb lands and the central Balkans. It is the line along which the Romans divided the eastern and western Roman Empire; it is there that the eastern and western churches, western and eastern cultures are divided.”⁵⁹

That Franjo Tuđman harboured Greater Croatian pretensions much before he became the president of Croatia can be seen from his 1977 “Draft of the Programme of the Croat National and Socialist Movement [*Hrvatski narodni i socijalistički pokret / HNSP*]”, published much later in his book *Usudbene povjestice* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1995): “It is true that the leadership of the HNSP starts from the reality of present-day boundaries of the republics, but it has to keep in mind that they were established to the detriment of Croatia in every respect [...] Sylvania and the Gulf of Kotor were exempted from the historic borders of the Croatian (Triune) Kingdom and taken away from Croatia, while the purely Croat areas in B[osnia]-H[erzegovina] (which had been incorporated even into Banovina Croatia in 1939) were not joined to it, nor was the Croat part of Bačka (with Subotica). Besides, while Vojvodina was joined to Serbia even though the national programme of the C[ommunist] P[arty of] Y[ugoslavia] in the former [interwar] Yugoslavia demanded that it become a federal unit, B-H was not incorporated into the Croat federal unit, although it is connected with Croatia in every respect (geographically, economically, by transportation, historically and culturally) more than Vojvodina is with Serbia.”⁶⁰

When the Croat Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica/HDZ*) led by Tuđman began its struggle for political power in Croatia, the promotional campaign it offered contained all geostrategic, economic and national-political ideas about Bosnia and Herzegovina which Ivo Pilar and Dominik Mandić had left as a legacy. Insisting on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s inseparableness from Croatia, the HDZ programme advocated

⁵⁹ Dr Dominik Mandić, *Hrvatske zemlje u prošlosti i sadašnjosti* (Chicago–Rome 1973), 167–168.

⁶⁰ Ivo Goldštajn, “Hrvatska i rat u Bosni 1992–1995: jedan pogled iz Zagreba”, in *Ne damo te lijepa naša*, collection of papers from the conference “Hrvati u BiH danas”, Banjaluka, 4–6 March 2011 (Banjaluka 2011), 109–110.

an “economic, transportation, spiritual and civilizational association of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina which constitute a natural, indivisible geopolitical whole and whose historical destiny suggests their reliance on one another”.⁶¹ Based on such premises, the Croat emigration in Canada, led by Gojko Šušak and in close contact with the HDZ leadership, by mid-1989 had already had a map of Greater Croatia encompassing all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Sandžak and the Montenegrin Adriatic coast. At a Croat emigrant meeting held that year in Vancouver, “[these] maps of ‘greater Croatia’ hung all over the place”.⁶²

When it comes to the HDZ’s Greater Croatian pretensions, particularly significant is the “Proclamation to the citizens and Diet of Croatia and to all Croat people” created in Zagreb on 29 November 1989. Article 2 of the “Proclamation” (which was signed, among others, by Šime Balen, Franjo Tuđman, Dalibor Brozović, Vladimir Šeks, Josip Manolić and Branimir Glavaš) states: “In opposition to the publicly communicated plans for creating a Greater Serbia, within or without the SFR Yugoslavia, and at the expense of the Croat and other non-Serb peoples, we put forth the demand for the territorial wholeness of the Croat people within its historical and natural borders.” The “Proclamation” was meant to mobilize Croatia against “Greater Serbian aggression”. There was no unanimity as to the precise delineation of Croatia’s “historical and natural borders”, but all agreed that they should encompass Bosnia and Herzegovina, and considerable portions of Vojvodina. After much debate and several versions of the borders, Manolić’s proposal was adopted not to go into delineating the borders, but instead to simply state that “there are historical and natural borders of Croatia”: “Why go into discussing whether to take this corner away from someone or to leave some other! We have stayed on the idea of unspecified borders anyway. Neither the borders of Banovina Croatia, nor the borders of the NDH, nor the AVNOJ borders! But simply — borders.”⁶³

As may be seen from Tuđman’s talks with representatives of the Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina and with his closest associates from Croatia during the Yugoslav crisis and wars (1991–1999), he sought ways to tie some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina as closely as possible to Croatia in state and legal terms. At the meeting with a HDZ-BH delegation held in Zagreb on 27 December 1991, Tuđman said, *inter alia*: “So, it seems

⁶¹ Dušan Vilić and Boško Todorović, *Razbijanje Jugoslavije 1990–1992* (Belgrade 1995), 416.

⁶² Darko Hudelist, *Tuđman: biografija* (Zagreb 2004), 638.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 656–659 ff.

to me, just like we exploited this historical moment to create an independent, internationally recognized Croatia, so I believe it is the moment to unite the Croat national being within the maximum possible borders. If that would be exactly 30 municipalities or 28 is less important even from this perspective..." Like Pilar, in fact following in Pilar's footsteps, Tuđman argued that "the state of Croatia as it is [likened to an unnatural pretzel] has no requisites for life, but a Croatian state even within the Banovina borders [1939] has..."⁶⁴ Intent on grabbing hold of some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁶⁵ Tuđman was ready to settle on the slightly expanded 1939 borders of Banovina Croatia,⁶⁶ or to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina with Serbia.⁶⁷

Following in the ideological footsteps of the Rightists, Frankists-clericalists and Ustashas, Tuđman, the good student of Ivo Pilar and Dominik Mandić, was adamantly opposed to the Muslims' self-identification as Bosniaks, insisting instead upon their being defined as Croats of Muslim faith, with a prospect of gradual Croatization,⁶⁸ just as the Serbs in Croatia were constantly pressed into becoming Croats of Orthodox faith. He justified the pretensions towards Bosnia and Herzegovina by the claim that constituting it as a republic after the Second World War had been a "historical absurdity", the restoration of "a colonial creation formed between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century".⁶⁹

Tuđman's commitment to Pilar's ideas can also be seen from a statement he made on 17 September 1992 at a meeting with representatives of the Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Gentlemen, the Bosnia-Herzegovina question is one of the vital questions for the Croat people as a whole, for the Republic of Croatia as a sovereign, internationally recognized state, and all Croats in B-H should be aware of it. It is not just a problem of the Croats in B-H, it is a problem of the Croatian state, of the Croat people as a whole. Why? Because it is so connected both historically and geopolitically with Croatia because of the unnatural borders of the present-day state of Croatia, because of B-H, be it this way or that..."⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Goldštajn, "Hrvatska i rat u Bosni", 111.

⁶⁵ *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, vol. I, ed. Predrag Lucić (Split – Sarajevo: Kultura & Rasvjeta, 2005), 87–88.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 118.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 245.

⁶⁸ For more on this, see vol. II of *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, ed. Ivan Lovrenović, 131, 145, 196, 217, 352 ff, 398 ff, 491 ff.

⁶⁹ Goldštajn, "Hrvatska i rat u Bosni", 111.

⁷⁰ *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, vol. I, 237.

Tudjman was ready to go to war to achieve his goal as regards Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a conversation with representatives of the Croat Defence Council (*Hrvatsko vijeće obrane/HVO*) for the Sava Valley region (Posavina) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the municipalities of Ravno, Čapljina and Stolac, on 21 September 1993, he said, among other things: “*A horrible thing such as war, that which is a tragedy for a person, for a family, for some areas, the greatest tragedy that there can be, in a sense even produces, by way of demarcation between peoples, some more favourable circumstances for the survival of some peoples in the future...*”⁷¹ Just as he justified genocide in his book *Bespuća povijesne zbiljnosti*,⁷² so now he justified war and bloodshed in the name of a better future for Croatia and Croats.

Even as the war was drawing to an end, at a meeting of Croatia’s highest officials in late 1993, Tudjman argued these were the times when “*borders of the future Croatian state are being defined. They will probably be larger than any Croat ruler or king in history had ever had under his control. [...] The Croat Republic of Herceg Bosna will join Croatia. Croatia will be stronger and more powerful.*”⁷³ This is an interesting statement for more than one reason, but there does not seem to be any doubt that the obsession of the Croatian president and his team — because of which he went to war to break Yugoslavia and create an independent Croatia — was a Greater Croatia. While carefully concealing the ultimate goal, the Croatian political leadership headed by Tudjman was using the well-known red-herring tactic ruthlessly accusing Serbia of having started the war in order to create a Greater Serbia.

The author of a book on Croatia’s political destiny argues without any hesitation that, after the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, and the annulment of the Treaty of Rome,⁷⁴ the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska / NDH*) was territorially rounded out, that Croatia achieved its geopolitical and geostrategic ideal in terms of size, shape and position. The only problem was that this ideal Croatia had “*too much non-Croat population*”⁷⁵ About the Ustasha state rounded out in September 1943, the same author, Petar Vučić, has to say the following: “*Even though it largely remained an unattained ideal, it has nonetheless re-*

⁷¹ Ibid. 337 (italics mine).

⁷² Published by Matica hrvatska in Zagreb in 1989; revised English edition: *Horrors of War* (New York: M. Evans & Company, 1996).

⁷³ Goldštajn, “Hrvatska i rat u Bosni”, 111.

⁷⁴ The Treaty of Rome concluded on 27 January 1924 between the Kingdom of SCS and Italy recognized Italian sovereignty over the city of Rijeka (Fiume).

⁷⁵ Petar Vučić, *Politička sudbina Hrvatske: geopolitičke i geostrateške karakteristike Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Mladost, 1995), 221.

mained a lasting witness to a high state-building movement which, through such a state-building project (albeit incompletely accomplished), became a true successor of the Croat historical state-building ideal and thought.”⁷⁶ The line of thinking which is quite in keeping with the well-known statement of Franjo Tuđman that “the NDH was not merely a ‘quisling’ creation and a ‘fascist crime’ but also an expression of the Croat people’s historical aspirations for its own independent state as well as of the realization by international factors [...] of these aspirations of Croatia and of its geographical borders.”⁷⁷ The ill-informed may have been surprised and upset by this statement, but it was fully in line with a century of aspirations and trends of Croatian politics.

In Tuđman’s case, these aspirations and trends are visible from his public statements as well. So, for example, in the opening speech he gave at the First General HDZ Convention held in Zagreb on 24 and 25 February 1990, he said the following: “This demand of ours has been an expression and continuation of the viewpoint of only such Croatian politicians of the last and this century as the ‘father of the homeland’ Dr. Ante Starčević, then Mihovil Pavlinović, Dr. Ante Trumbić and Stjepan Radić. All of them spoke of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the viewpoint of their geopolitical unity with Croatia and the West, having no doubts as to where their people would decide it belonged at a referendum.”⁷⁸ Judging by this, Tuđman was a true follower of the geopolitician Pilar, the historian Mandić and *poglavnik* Pavelić, as can also be seen from what he said at his meeting with the highest military officials held on 23 August 1995 in the Presidential Palace in Zagreb. Tuđman clearly and without a second thought let his collocutors know that the demographic issue in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Istria should be resolved militarily because, he emphasized, it was the only way to firm up Croatdom in those parts, adding that the Croat Republic of Herceg Bosna and the HVO had been created specifically for that purpose.⁷⁹

That a Greater Croatia with all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as far as the Drina, has been an ideal of Croat politicians can also be seen from the words of a priest uttered from the pulpit of the church of the Wounded Jesus in Zagreb. He wished for a “more beautiful, better, larger and happier” Croatia whose seat would be at Banjaluka, as the *poglavnik* had wished it to be. The Dominican Vjekoslav Lasić also expressed his hope that the wish

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Prvi opći sabor Hrvatske demokratske zajednice”, *Glasnik HDZ-a* 8 (March 1990), 18.

⁷⁸ *Za Hrvatsku* (Zagreb: Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia), 234–235.

⁷⁹ Ivica Djikić, “Stenogrami o etničkom čišćenju: Feral objavljuje sadržaj tajnog sastanka Tuđmanova štaba nakon ‘Oluje’”, *Feral Tribune*, 5 July 2003.

would come true, even more so because the “current shape of Croatia is a little bit strange”.⁸⁰

Vjekoslav Matijević, a lawyer and President of the Croatian Liberation Movement (*Hrvatski oslobodilački pokret*) — founded by Pavelić in 1929 after the Croatian Party of Right was banned — said in an interview in 1993 that the Croats had to be “firm and adamant about the question of our borders, and join forces to stop the Serbs from crossing the Drina...”⁸¹

Vučić, the Dominican Lasić and Matijević are not lonely fanatics. They say what and how Croat political circles thought and still think about the future of Croatia. A certain Radomir Milišić joined them when he wrote: “Since the destiny of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the destiny of the Croats in this state, is inseparable from Croatia, i.e. Croatia and Croats have to do their best to let it separate from Croatia too much (because Croats are a sovereign people there, and they can defend that right only with the help of the Republic of Croatia), Croatia will have to keep an eye and ear on that space which is so vital to it. The spaces that the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina have organized and physically defended are a basis of Croat sovereignty in that state, as well as proof that Bosnia cannot be built without Croats.”⁸²

Finally, the very fact that an institute named after Dr Ivo Pilar was founded in Zagreb not so long ago appears to show that his thought is still well and alive in Croatia, and that it has a following.

As a result of the persistent demand for incorporating Bosnia and Herzegovina into Croatia, so that the latter can live and not just “vegetate”, the Croats, as Stjepan Radić believed, “have been taught to think that there can be no free and united Croatia without Bosnia and Herzegovina”.⁸³

The few examples of Greater-Croatian territorial pretensions towards Bosnia and Herzegovina on the grounds of Croat state and historical right presented here serve only as an illustration. However, all followers of the policy of Eugen Kvaternik and Ante Starčević, who predicated their programmes on “on old deeds and ‘virtual’ territorial claims”, had a rapacious appetite for territory. There is no need today to waste time proving that the Ustasha regime of Ante Pavelić based its entire politics on Croat state and historical right. That politics showed its dark face to the world during the war years from 1941 to 1945. Even though the world was surprised and appalled by its vicious brutality, it was a logical outcome of an ill-founded and

⁸⁰ Damir Pilić, “Kako je otac Vjekoslav Lasić u crkvi Ranjenog Isusa u Zagrebu obogetvorio ustaškoga Antu Pavelića”, *Feral Tribune*, 6 January 1997.

⁸¹ *Hrvatski vjesnik* no. 21–22 (Vinkovci, Zadar), 15 May 1993, 14–15.

⁸² Radomir Milišić, *Stvaranje Hrvatske: analiza nacionalne strategije* (Zagreb 1995), 12.

⁸³ Stjepan Radić, *Politički spisi* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1971), 289.

irrational policy which could have no other result than hatred towards the Serbs, eventually leading to one of the most horrible genocides in history.

Franjo Tuđman also based his politics on Croat state and historical right and planned to incorporate Bosnia and Herzegovina into Croatia, because he was also “taught to think”, as Radić put it, “that there can be no free and united Croatia without Bosnia and Herzegovina”. With this politics Tuđman embarked on a war to break Yugoslavia and create a large and independent Croat state. The result of this aspiration is an ethnically cleansed Croatia. By creating a state without Serbs, Croatia has come closer to its geostrategic goal as regards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Without Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, without this internal “factor of disturbance”, it will pounce, with more energy and fewer obstacles and hurdles, upon Bosnia and Herzegovina, upon Serbs and Muslims. As long as Croatia and its politicians pursue the policy based on Croat state and historical right, they will aspire to grab hold of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and there will be no peace and stability in the region.

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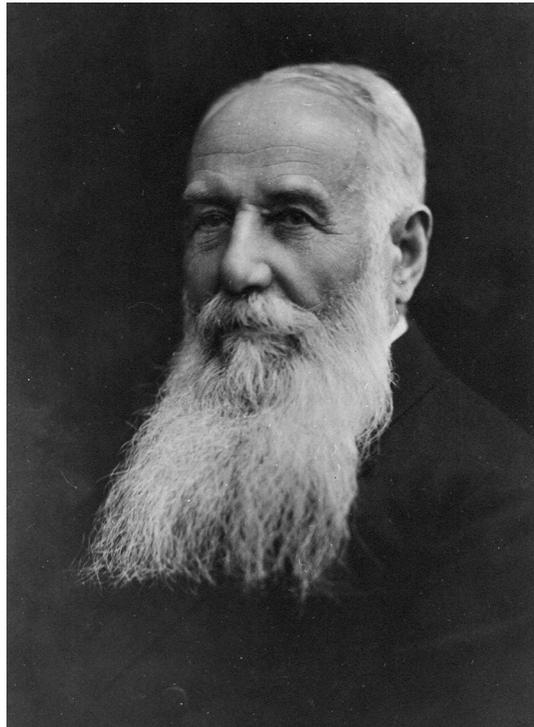
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