

**Serbia and the Serbian Rebellion in Croatia
(1990-1991)**

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Declaration

All the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Harry Jack Hayball

Abstract

It is often suggested that the Serbian rebellion in Croatia in 1990-91 was orchestrated by Serbia, and, in particular, by its president Slobodan Milošević personally. Despite the popularity of this interpretation, however, the literature on the break-up of Yugoslavia is yet to offer a focused study of Serbia's role in the descent into conflict in Croatia. Many sources that have become available in recent years remain unused. Through a critical and cautious use of such sources, including extensive interviews with participants in the conflict and contemporary documentation, this thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature and to update our knowledge of this important aspect of the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia. Honing in on Belgrade's relationships with Serb political and military/paramilitary leaders in Croatia, as well as Serbia's direct involvement in and attitude towards the road to war, it concludes that the existing focus on Milošević's Serbia has been misplaced. Serbia's stance towards Croatia was hardline, but Belgrade's influence over the Croatian Serbs was limited and its direct involvement in events minimal. Milošević did not have a grand plan to orchestrate violence in Croatia, and the leaders of the Serbian rebellion in Croatia were fundamentally independent and autonomous actors, who, far from being Milošević's puppets, were often in conflict with him. The interaction between Croat and Serb nationalists within Croatia provides a strong explanation for the descent into conflict there, including its rapid militarisation. A partial exception is provided by the region of Eastern Slavonia, where factors such as the late onset of the rebellion made the region much more amenable to Belgrade's influence, though principally after the war had already begun. The findings of this thesis point to a need for re-assessment of the role of Serbia in the break-up of Yugoslavia.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

DB:	State Security service (<i>Državna bezbednost</i>)
HDZ:	Croatian Democratic Community (<i>Hrvatska demokratska zajednica</i>)
ICTY:	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
JCE:	Joint Criminal Enterprise
JNA:	Yugoslav Peoples' Army (<i>Jugoslavenska narodna armija</i>)
JSDS:	Yugoslav Independent Democratic Party (<i>Jugoslavenska samostalna demokratska stranka</i>)
JSO:	Special Operations Unit of the Serbian DB, also known as the "Red Berets" (<i>Jedinica za specijalne operacije</i>)
JUL:	Yugoslav United Left (<i>Jugoslovenska udružena levica</i>)
MUP:	Ministry of the Interior (<i>Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova</i>)
NDH:	Independent State of Croatia (1941-45) (<i>Nezavisna Država Hrvatska</i>)
OB:	JNA security (<i>Organi bezbednosti</i>)
OTP:	Office of the Prosecutor, of the ICTY
RS:	Serbian Republic (of the Bosnian Serbs) (<i>Republika Srpska</i>)
RSK:	Republic of Serbian Krajina (<i>Republika Srpska Krajina</i>)
RTV:	Radio-Television
SANU:	Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (<i>Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti</i>)
SAO:	Serbian Autonomous Province (<i>Srpska autonomna oblast</i>)
SAOK:	Serbian Autonomous Province of Krajina (<i>Srpska autonomna oblast Krajina</i>)
SAO-SBZS:	Serbian Autonomous Province of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem (<i>Srpska autonomna oblast Slavonija, Baranja i Zapadni Srem</i>)
SDF:	Serbian Democratic Forum (<i>Srpski demokratski forum</i>)
SDS:	Serbian Democratic Party (<i>Srpska demokratska stranka</i>)
SFRJ:	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (<i>Socialistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija</i>)

SJS:	Public security station (<i>Stanica javne sigurnosti</i>)
SK-PZJ:	League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia (<i>Savez komunista – Pokret za Jugoslaviju</i>)
SKH:	League of Communists of Croatia (<i>Savez komunista Hrvatske</i>)
SKH-SDP:	League of Communists of Croatia – Party of Democratic Change (<i>Savez komunista Hrvatske – Stranka demokratske promjene</i>)
SKJ:	League of Communists of Yugoslavia (<i>Savez komunista Jugoslavije</i>)
SNO:	Council of National Resistance (<i>Savjet narodnog otpora</i>)
SNV:	Serbian National Council (<i>Srpsko nacionalno vijeće</i>)
SO:	Municipality (<i>Skupština općine</i>)
SPO:	Serbian Renewal Movement (<i>Srpski pokret obnove</i>)
SPS:	Socialist Party of Serbia (<i>Socijalistička partija Srbije</i>)
SR:	Socialist Republic (<i>Socijalistička Republika</i>)
SRH:	Socialist Republic of Croatia (<i>Socijalistička Republika Hrvatska</i>)
SPH-PJO:	Socialist Party of Croatia – Party of Yugoslav Orientation (<i>Socijalistička partija Hrvatske - Partija jugoslavenske orijentacije</i>)
SUP:	Secretariat of the Interior (<i>Sekretarijat unutrašnjih poslova</i>)
TO:	Territorial Defence (<i>Teritorijalna odbrana</i>)
VJ:	Yugoslav Army (<i>Vojska Jugoslavije</i>)
ZNG:	Croatian National Guard (<i>Zbor narodne garde</i>)

Chapter 1: Introduction

In April-May 1990 multi-party elections were held in Croatia, then one of six republics of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. A little more than a year later the republic would be rocked by a vicious and bloody war in which more than 12,000 people died, a great many of them civilians, and hundreds of thousands fled their homes.

The basic sequence of events within Croatia that led up to this is not particularly controversial. The elections had seen the triumph of the Croatian Democratic Community (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ), a nationalist movement led by Croatian dissident and former Yugoslav general Franjo Tuđman. The HDZ was committed to securing greater Croatian independence, and soon began making moves in this direction. This was, however, anathema to the republic's Serbian minority (or, at least, parts of it), who made up twelve percent of the republic's population and formed the majority population on about a fifth of its territory, mainly in the 'Krajina' region and parts of Slavonia.¹ Over the course of 1990 and 1991, under the leadership of the Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka*, SDS), the main Serb-inhabited regions in Croatia gradually seceded from Croatia, announcing their intention to instead 'remain' in Yugoslavia along with the Republic of Serbia and other 'Serb lands'. This political rebellion against the authorities in Croatia was accompanied by a military/paramilitary rebellion, starting with the outbreak of the 'Balvan Revolution' (Log Revolution) in the Knin Krajina in August 1990. From spring 1991 onwards armed conflicts increasingly erupted between rebel Serb and Croatian forces, and the Yugoslav Peoples' Army (*Jugoslavenska narodna armija*, JNA) began to intervene, ostensibly to prevent such clashes. By the autumn the situation had reached open war, between

¹ 'Krajina' means frontier or borderland, and its use for parts of Croatia is partly derived from the former 'Vojna Krajina', military frontier, of the Austrian empire, though the territories only partly coincided. In the 1990s it was generally used to refer to the Serbian-populated regions of North Dalmatia, Eastern Lika, Kordun and Banija, though sometimes it was used in plural to refer to all the declared Serbian regions in Croatia. See Appendices, Figures 2 and 4.

Croatian forces on one side, and rebel Serbs and the JNA on the other. The Vance peace plan, named after UN negotiator Cyrus Vance, then froze the conflict with a de facto partition of Croatia, with Serb rebel regions forming an internationally unrecognised Republic of Serbian Krajina (*Republika Srpska Krajina*, RSK), which survived until being militarily vanquished by Croatia in 1995.²

This sequence of intra-Croatian events is, however, only part of the story, because a decisive role in all of these developments is widely attributed to an actor external to the republic: the Republic of Serbia, and, specifically, its then president Slobodan Milošević. For most Croatians, indeed, the war in Croatia was above all a defensive 'homeland war' against the expansionist 'aggression' of Serbia. Milošević was seen as the mastermind behind the conflict, manipulating Serbs in Croatia in his quest for a 'Greater Serbia'. In Serbia, by contrast, the conflict was predominantly portrayed as a civil war and a war of self-defence by local Serbs against neo-fascist Croatian authorities, with Serbian officials largely denying involvement. As Milošević argued in 1991: 'We are not in conflict with Croatia. This is not a conflict between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia. This is a conflict between the Croatian authorities and the Serbian people [in Croatia]'.³

Serbia's arguments were never given much credence in the West, however, and in the academic literature to date there has been a broad agreement on the destructive role that Serbia, and Milošević personally, played in the conflict. Most authors attribute the conflict not, primarily, to long-term factors such as alleged 'ancient hatreds' between Serbs and Croats, but to the decisions of political elites at the time and, above all, Milošević, who in many prominent works is portrayed as the driving force behind the war and the puppet master of the Croatian Serbs. Belgrade⁴ has been seen as standing

² For the borders of the RSK see Appendices, Figure 3. The Vance plan entailed the withdrawal of the JNA from Croatia, the return of all refugees and the deployment of UN peacekeepers in the Krajinas, which were to be demilitarised apart from regular police, with subsequent negotiations to determine their final status.

³ 'Milošević Interview With Sky News Reported', *Belgrade RTV Sat TV*, 7/8/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-153, 18/8/1991.

⁴ 'Belgrade' is here used as short-hand to refer to the official governing authorities in Serbia, led by

behind all aspects of the Serbian rebellion in Croatia: instigating the sidelining of moderates, such as initial SDS leader Jovan Rašković, and their replacement with more hardline figures, such as Milan Babić; producing a shift in SDS proposals from cultural autonomy and rights within Croatia towards armed rebellion and secession; arming, organising and directing Serb rebels in Croatia, and ordering them to provoke conflict; conspiring to create JNA intervention to 'cut-off' Croatia and occupy its 'Serb' territories; and more.

This thesis offers a critical re-examination of the Serbian rebellion in Croatia in 1990-91 and the view that this rebellion was orchestrated and directed by Serbia, and Milošević personally. It looks at Belgrade's relationship with Serb political and military/paramilitary leaders in Croatia in this period, as well as Belgrade's direct involvement in and attitude towards the road to war in Croatia. It seeks to answer a number of key questions: what relationship did the Serbian authorities have with the SDS and its main leaders, such as Jovan Rašković and Milan Babić? Were SDS officials acting on instructions from Serbia, and did they owe their positions to Serbia's support? What solutions to the 'Serbian question' in Croatia did the SDS and Serbia respectively envisage, and how did they intend to achieve those solutions? Did Serbia have a deliberate strategy of interfering in Croatia and directing or instigating developments there? What role did Serbia play in the arming of the Serbs in Croatia and their armed rebellion against the Croatian authorities? Had Serbia decided on war as the only way to achieve its goals from an early stage, or was any serious consideration given to negotiations or the pursuit of a compromise? And what was the role of the JNA?

Many of these topics have previously received only a cursory examination in the literature on the break-up of Yugoslavia, while the wealth of relevant source materials that has become available in the last decade, most notably through the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), remains largely unused. Through

Slobodan Milošević. I also interchangeably use the terms 'Serbia', 'the Serbian leadership', 'the Serbian authorities', and 'official Belgrade'. Federal institutions, also located in Belgrade, are identified individually. 'Zagreb' is used in a similar fashion.

a critical and cautious use of such sources, supplemented by extensive interviews with participants in the conflict, this thesis aims to fill a gap in the literature, to update our knowledge of this important aspect of the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia, and to reconsider some widely held notions about Serbia's role in the descent into conflict in Croatia.

1.1. Literature Review

There is a vast and varied literature on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, for which a number of different causes have been identified. These range from a 'clash of civilisations' and 'ancient hatreds' (interpretations widely rejected by scholars, though occasionally employed by journalists), to the roles of nationalism, economics, institutions, ideology, intellectual and political elites, and international politics, as well as various political dynamics such as 'security dilemmas'.⁵ The war in Croatia is usually discussed as part of wider works on the break-up of Yugoslavia, and most scholars note a multiplicity of factors underlying the conflict, both long and short-term. Longer-term causes commonly mentioned include, among others, the historic nationalisms and national projects of Serbs and Croats, the related desire of the Croatian Serbs to live in Yugoslavia rather than an independent Croatia, and their suffering at the hands of Croatian fascists in the Second World War (the Ustaše,⁶ and their Independent State of Croatia - *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH). However, an emphasis on shorter-term factors, and the decision-making of Yugoslav political elites at the time, has dominated, and it is on these factors that this thesis, and literature review, focuses.

In this respect, the existing literature can be divided into three categories, which I term 'orthodox', 'multi-factor' and 'revisionist'. The 'orthodox' view, in Robert Hayden's words, has been that 'Milošević roused Serb nationalism to threaten the other peoples in Yugoslavia, thus forcing other republics to secede. Then Milošević activated a plan for a Greater Serbia, invading first Croatia, then Bosnia, and committing genocide in both countries.'⁷ As Louis Sell puts it: 'Yugoslavia did not die a natural death, it was

⁵ Comprehensive overviews of contending explanations for the break-up of Yugoslavia can be found in: Jasna Dragović-Soso, 'Why did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations', in Leonard J. Cohen & Jasna Dragović-Soso (eds), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press 2007), pp.1-39. Dejan Jović, *Yugoslavia: A State That Withered Away* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009), pp.13-33.

⁶ Ustaše is the plural form of 'Ustaša'. Anglicised versions – Ustasha and Ustashes – are sometimes used in the literature, and I have kept these when quoting such works. For other forms of the word I use Anglicised versions - for example, 'Ustashism'.

⁷ Robert Hayden, *Blueprints for a House Divided: The Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflicts*

murdered, and Milošević, more than any other single leader, was responsible.⁸ Most prominent works can be placed in this 'orthodox' category,⁹ with its most vocal advocates including authors such as Sabrina Ramet, Norman Cigar, James Gow, Marcus Tanner and Viktor Meier.¹⁰

Authors such as Hayden, Leonard Cohen, Susan Woodward, Dejan Jović, Mihailo Crnobrnja and Aleksandar Pavković, on the other hand, have located the causes of the disintegration much more evenly among the different factions in Yugoslavia. They do not doubt the destructive role played by Milošević's Serbia, but see it as just one factor in the disintegration, for which they tend to offer more complex, nuanced and multi-faceted explanations.¹¹ I call these accounts 'multi-factor'.

Finally, there have also been a minority of 'revisionist' works, by authors such as Kate Hudson, Nora Beloff, Alex Dragnich and Diana Johnstone. These have vigorously

(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p.26.

⁸ Louis Sell, *Slobodan Milošević and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp.4-5.

⁹ As Jasna Dragović-Soso notes, in the literature to date there has been an 'overwhelming focus on Milošević and Serbia's policy' and 'a near consensus concerning the centrality of the role played by... Milošević in the disintegration process'. Dragović-Soso, *op. cit.*, pp.17, 14.

¹⁰ See, for example: Sell. Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration Of Yugoslavia From The Death Of Tito To The Fall of Milošević* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2002). Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991' in Stjepan Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion: The Post-emotional Balkan War* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.59-60. James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (London: C. Hurt & Co, 1997). Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (London: Yale Nota Bene, 2001), pp.218-9. Viktor Meier, *Yugoslavia: A History of its Demise* (London: Routledge, 1999). And: V.P. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990's* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004). Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (London: C. Hurt & Co, 1995), p.125. Branka Magas, 'The War in Croatia', in Brad K. Blitz (ed), *War and Change in the Balkans: Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.662. Adam LeBor, *Milošević: A Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003). Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia: A History* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), p.126. Reneo Lukić, 'Greater Serbia a new reality in the Balkans', *Nationalities Papers*, 22:1 (1994), pp.49-70. Christopher Cviic, 'Croatia', in David Dyker and Ivan Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth* (New York: Longman, 1996), p.208.

¹¹ See, for example: Hayden. Leonard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1993). Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995). Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*. Mihajlo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996). Aleksandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism in a Multinational State* (London: MacMillan Press, 1997).

contested the 'orthodox' focus on Milošević and the Serbs and focused instead on other actors in Yugoslavia, as well as foreign states such as Germany and the United States.¹²

These broad-stroke categorisations are fluid - some prominent works straddle categories - and they mask the colour, complexity and diversity of different authors' arguments regarding the disintegration of Yugoslavia.¹³ But they are heuristically useful when providing an overview of the literature's greatest divergences on the subject of this thesis: the descent into war in Croatia. Here, 'orthodox', 'multi-factor' and 'revisionist' works vary most clearly on three key issues: the relative importance of the role of Belgrade; the role of Zagreb; and the extent to which the Croatian Serbs were puppets of Milošević.

Table 1 – Views on Key Elements of the Descent into Conflict in Croatia

	<i>'Orthodox'</i>	<i>'Multi-factor'</i>	<i>'Revisionist'</i>
Role of Belgrade	Fundamental, dominant	Just one of several factors	Insignificant
Role of Zagreb	Insignificant	Significant, one of several factors	Fundamental, dominant
Agency of Croatian Serbs	Puppets	Some agency	Independent

¹² See, for example: Kate Hudson, *Breaking the South Slav Dream: The Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Pluto Press, 2003). Nora Beloff, *Yugoslavia: An Avoidable War* (London: New European Publications, 1997). Alex N. Dragnich, *Yugoslavia's Disintegration and the Struggle for Truth* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1996). Diana Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* (New York: Monthly Press Review, 2002). And: David Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009). Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons From Kosovo* (London: Pluto Press, 1999). John Laughland, *Travesty: The Trial of Slobodan Milošević and the Corruption of International Justice* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

¹³ In Silber and Little's account, for example, Milošević is the prime villain, but Slovenian and Croatian leaders also bear a heavy responsibility, while they and the authors of *Balkan Battlegrounds* point to Zagreb's role in provoking the Serbian rebellion, whilst also insisting that that rebellion was directed by Belgrade. Laura Silber & Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp.82-118. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995, Volume 1* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002), pp.83-92.

The most 'orthodox' works have clear answers to these questions (represented in Table 1, above). Belgrade was the key, almost exclusive cause of the war and the Serbian rebellion, which was 'not an uprising by Serbs afraid of the Croats, but an offensive prepared long before 1991 in Belgrade and carefully coordinated from there right from the [start]'.¹⁴ Croatian actions were inconsequential in provoking the conflict, as the Serb rebellion was motivated not by justified grievances, but a nationalist agenda directed from Belgrade.¹⁵ It would have occurred even if Tuđman – who was open to 'any settlement with Croatia's Serbs... including [territorial] autonomy for Krajina'¹⁶ - had 'changed water into wine... and raised Serb victims of the Ustashas from the dead'.¹⁷ Croatian provocations, to the extent that they are acknowledged, were 'mistakes' or 'blunders' rather than evidence of malintent,¹⁸ or the work of minority 'extremists' rather than the 'moderates' dominant in the ruling HDZ.¹⁹ As Meier emphasises, 'there were no concrete acts on the part of the Croatian authorities which could be said to have instigated or justified the unrest. There were only errors and acts of sheer incompetence'.²⁰ The Serb nationalists in Croatia, meanwhile, are generally seen as puppets of Milošević, who 'was orchestrating the Croatian Serbs' political machinations' from an early stage.²¹ The Serb 'rebellion' was simply, as Gagnon argues, 'a repeat of [Milošević's] stage-managed demonstrations that led to the overthrow of the Montenegro and Vojvodina leaderships' in 1988-89.²² Some 'orthodox' works do describe the Croatian Serbs in ways that imply they had some degree of agency, but the

¹⁴ Cviic, p.207.

¹⁵ For example: Meier, p.155. Goldstein, p.126. Bennett, pp.135-6.

¹⁶ Bennett, p.147. Similarly: Budislav Vukas, 'The Legal Status of Minorities in Croatia', in Snežana Trifunovska (ed), *Minorities in Europe - Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia* (London: Asser Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Goldstein, p.126. And: Meier, p.155. Bennett, pp.135-6. Cigar. Gagnon, *op. cit.*. Richard Caplan, *Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.119-20. Gale Stokes, 'From Nation to Minority: Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia at the Outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars', *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 52, no. 6 (2005), p.10. Lukić, p.60.

¹⁸ Bennett, p.141. LeBor, p.145. Meier, p.155. Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.141.

¹⁹ Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.141. Likewise: Robert Hislope, *Nationalism, Ethnic Politics and Democratic Consolidation: A Comparative Study of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Unpublished dissertation, Ohio State University, 1995), p.210. Ramet, *op. cit.*, p.58.

²⁰ Meier, p.155.

²¹ CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.1*, p.85. For example: Silber & Little, pp.25-7, 98-103. Sell, pp.1-7, 116-7. Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.80-3, 92-5, 139, 142-9. Bennett, pp.127, 136, 242-6. Tanner, pp.225-6, 231-3, 255-6. Meier, pp.xi, 118-9, 150.

²² Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.14.

focus is very much on arguing that 'the rebellion of the Serbs in Croatia did not only arise out of their own ranks but was [also] incited and even organised by Milošević'.²³

'Multi-factor' accounts, on the other hand, see Belgrade as just one determinant of the escalation into war in Croatia, emphasising also the role of the Croatian authorities and local issues.²⁴ Cohen, for example, agrees that Tuđman 'went out of his way to assure the republic's Serbs, and also international observers, that minority rights would be respected', but notes that he was also 'frequently insensitive' and such conciliatory efforts were 'at odds with the nationalist and anti-Serb rhetoric frequently adopted by Tuđman and certain quarters of his party's leadership'.²⁵ Mile Bjelajac and Ozren Žunec, meanwhile, argue that the HDZ 'did almost nothing to persuade the Serbs of their good intentions',²⁶ while Crnobrnja and Jovan Mirić even insist that Tuđman behaved in the 'most provocative way possible' towards Croatia's Serbs,²⁷ who 'had all reasons for fear and rebellion'.²⁸ These works usually agree that Belgrade was promoting, encouraging or even directing Serb hardliners in Croatia, but place less emphasis on this, seeing it as just one element in the conflict.²⁹ Mirić, for example, maintains that Tuđman's anti-Serbian politics and Milošević's aggressiveness and manipulation of Serbs in Croatia were both essential requirements for the Serbian rebellion in Croatia which, absent one of these elements, would not have occurred.³⁰ Some 'multi-factor' accounts also see the Croatian Serbs as essentially independent.³¹ Most notably, Rogers Brubaker has explicitly argued that the Croatian Serbs should be treated as a separate element in the conflict, maintaining that a 'triadic nexus' of three 'relational fields' existed: the

²³ Meier, p.153. Similarly: Gow, *op. cit.*, p.19. Bennett, p.125.

²⁴ For example: Silber & Little, pp.96-7. Crnobrnja, pp.145, 151, 169. Paul Roe, *Ethnic Violence and the Societal Security Dilemma* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp.93-9, 108-9. Roger Peterson, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2002), pp.228-9.

²⁵ Cohen, pp.208, 131

²⁶ Mile Bjelajac and Ozren Žunec, *The War in Croatia, 1991-1995* (The Scholars' Initiative Research Team Seven, 2006), p.6.

²⁷ Crnobrnja, p.145.

²⁸ Jovan Mirić, *Zločin i Kazna* (Zagreb: Prosvjeta, 2002), pp.34. Similarly: Hayden, pp.69-70.

²⁹ See, for example: Cohen, pp.131-3, 142, 201, 207, 225. Hayden, p.185, notes 7-8. Gibbs' account, though broadly 'revisionist', is also a good example of this approach: Gibbs, pp.67, 88-91.

³⁰ Mirić, p.46.

³¹ For example: Pavković, pp.128-30. Crnobrnja, pp.152, 169.

'nationalising state' (Croatia), the 'national minority' (the Croatian Serbs), and its 'external national homeland' (Serbia). The dynamic between all three actors, with Croatian nationalism encouraging the mobilisation of the Serbian minority, in turn fuelled by the regime in Serbia and in turn increasing Croatian fears, explains the conflict.³²

Finally, 'revisionist' works have placed even greater emphasis on the role of the Croatian side in provoking the conflict, and portrayed the actions of both the Croatian Serbs and Belgrade as to a large extent reactive, defensive and justified. They also tend to consider the Croatian Serbs as independent actors. Hudson, for example, argues that the Serbs in Croatia had the constitutional right to self-determination, and simply opted to remain in Yugoslavia rather than Tuđman's new independent Croatia, 'which stripped the Serbs of their constitutional protections and rehabilitated the Ustasha regime'.³³

There are thus considerable differences between rival accounts of the conflict in Croatia, and much polarisation. This polarisation permeates every aspect of scholars' accounts – even, as Ramet observes, 'rather unimportant details'.³⁴ Virtually every 'fact' is contested, and, as Bjelajac and Žunec write: 'Everything depends on who is talking, and thus the academic work becomes a perfect example of how the social construction of reality works.'³⁵ Something as basic as the content of the Croatian constitution or flag, for example, is portrayed completely differently by different authors.³⁶ Despite this polarisation, however, there has still been relatively little meta-debate over which interpretations are more valid. Most authors simply present their own version of events

³² Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.58, 70-75.

³³ Hudson, pp.77-98.

³⁴ Sabrina Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.5.

³⁵ Bjelajac and Žunec, p.4.

³⁶ Contrast, for example: Hayden, pp.185, 81-2. Stuart Hodges, 'National Identity, Politics & Representation: Croatian National Identity 1990-1992', *Nationalism and National Identities Today: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, University of Surrey, CRONEM Annual Conference 2007 (12-13 June 2007), p.5. With: Ramet, *op. cit.*, pp.6-7. Tanner, pp.223-4.

and their own 'facts'; the divergent accounts are hardly ever compared or brought together in a single field of vision.

The agency of the Croatian Serbs and role of Belgrade have attracted particularly little discussion. Moreover, although some works treat the Croatian Serbs as largely independent, this point is only rarely emphasised or explicitly explored as a counter-point to the focus on Belgrade, and attention has instead focused overwhelmingly on just two of Brubaker's three 'relational fields' – Croatia and, above all, Serbia. As Nina Caspersen therefore observes: 'In the literature on the Yugoslav disintegration, the Serbian regime is commonly assigned overwhelming influence over the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia, whose status as independent actors is consequently questioned.'³⁷ In addition, many key 'orthodox' claims about Belgrade's role in Croatia – for example, its sidelining of Rašković and arming of Serb rebels (discussed later) - are yet to be questioned or challenged by the literature. 'Multi-factor' works simply place much less emphasis on these purported developments, or decline to mention them, while even 'revisionist' works simply focus instead on documenting the actions of the Croatian side and emphasising the defensiveness of the Croatian Serbs.³⁸

Before exploring in detail Belgrade's involvement in Croatia, however, it is important to consider how existing works have covered these issues: on what basis has it been argued that Milošević's influence over the various political and military/paramilitary leaders of Serbs in Croatia was decisive? How has Serbia been linked to developments in Croatia? How have the military rebellion of the Croatian Serbs, the role of the JNA, and Milošević's plans and intentions, been understood? Existing writing on these topics does not lend itself readily to categorisation, therefore the following sections of this literature review are topic-based.³⁹

³⁷ Nina Caspersen, *Contested Nationalism: Serb Elite Rivalry in Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990s* (London: Berghahn Books, 2010), p.31.

³⁸ For example: Hudson, pp.77-98

³⁹ Cohen, for example, treats the Croatian Serbs as largely independent actors and provides a very 'multi-factor', rather than Belgrade-centric, account of the rise of Croat-Serb conflicts in Croatia, but also regards Rašković as much more radical than most of the literature, including most 'orthodox' works, suggest. Similarly, Gordy takes a highly 'orthodox' stance on Belgrade's role in orchestrating the war,

Croatian Serb Leaders and Belgrade

Despite the tendency to portray the Croatian Serb nationalists as mere extensions of Milošević's politics, two initial Serb nationalist leaders in Croatia – the founding president of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) Jovan Rašković, and his effective successor Milan Babić – have nevertheless received some attention in the literature. Indeed, their power struggle is widely cited as illustrating the pivotal role of Milošević in orchestrating the conflict. Most authors see Rašković as advocating a relatively moderate political programme, consisting of 'constituent status' for Serbs, and/or cultural autonomy.⁴⁰ A few authors do note more radical proposals from Rašković,⁴¹ and Marcus Tanner and Tim Judah consider him 'vague' and contradictory.⁴² Most would, nevertheless, agree with Robert Hislope's assessment that 'Rašković's more radical speeches can usually be traced to pressures from within the SDS or the sheer heavy-handedness of HDZ policy', and that Rašković was 'at heart a moderate who exhibited a flexibility that made dialogue and a new settlement a real possibility'.⁴³ Cohen appears to be a rare exception in stating that Rašković's own proposals had escalated by late 1990 to the formation of a separate Krajina state.⁴⁴ Misha Glenny, for example, explicitly argues that Rašković's proposals 'neither compromised Croatia's territorial integrity, nor effectively created a "state within a state"', and 'at no point did Rašković express an interest in taking Serb areas out of Croatia', even if Croatia seceded.⁴⁵ More recent works have concurred with these assessments. Caspersen, for instance, notes

whilst simultaneously arguing against the typically 'orthodox' notion that Milošević was following a predetermined plan. Cohen, pp.132, 142. Eric Gordy, 'Destruction of the Yugoslav Federation: Policy or Confluence of Tactics?', in Cohen & Dragović-Soso (eds), pp.296-7. Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp.43-4.

⁴⁰ For example: Silber & Little, p.96. Meier, p.148, 153-4. Keichi Kubo, 'Democratization and Inter-Ethnic Relations in Multiethnic Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Croatia and Macedonia', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. Tomus 21 (2004), p.187. Hislope, *op. cit.*, pp.173-4. Roe, pp.102-8.

⁴¹ Peter Radan, *The break-up of Yugoslavia and international law* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.178. Caplan, p.117.

⁴² Tanner, pp.224-5. Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth & the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (London: Yale Nota Bene, 2000), p.168.

⁴³ Hislope, *op. cit.*, pp.173-4. Similarly: Caplan, p.117.

⁴⁴ Cohen, pp.132, 142.

⁴⁵ Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.19.

'considerable ambiguity' in SDS demands, but argues that Rašković's 'most important demand' was 'retain[ing] [the Serbs'] constituent status in Croatia', and that his initial cultural autonomy ideas had 'no territorial dimension'.⁴⁶ There is also a broad consensus that Rašković sought to avoid war,⁴⁷ Glenny considering this his 'main political strategy'.⁴⁸

Rašković is thereby placed in stark contrast to Babić, who is widely characterised as an 'extremist' and 'hardliner' who opposed negotiations and pursued a policy of confrontation.⁴⁹ Silber and Little, Robert Donia, Glenny and Judah all credit Babić, as opposed to Rašković, with '[introducing] the idea of territorial autonomy which later developed into a policy of secession from Croatia'.⁵⁰ While Rašković was talking to Tuđman, Silber and Little argue, Babić was preparing an armed uprising, 'the purpose of which was not to secure Serbs autonomy inside Croatia, but to take the Serbs, and the land on which they lived, out of Croatia altogether'.⁵¹

A similar contrast is seen in commentary on the two leaders' relations with Belgrade. Although a few authors note Rašković co-operating with Belgrade or following its lead,⁵² Rašković is usually viewed as an independent figure.⁵³ Babić, by contrast, is perceived as Belgrade's man. His separatist uprising was 'directed by Belgrade', whose 'bidding' he was doing,⁵⁴ and, as Glenny suggests, 'it is extremely likely that [Babić and

⁴⁶ Caspersen, *op. cit.*, 51, 65, 69. Similarly: Robert Donia, *Radovan Karadžić: Architect of the Bosnian Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.74-5.

⁴⁷ Philip Cohen being a rare exception: Philip Cohen, 'The Complicity of Serbian Intellectuals in Genocide in the 1990s', in Thomas Cushman & Stjepan G. Meštrović, *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia* (New York and London: New York University, 1996), pp.50-1.

⁴⁸ Glenny, *op. cit.*, p.17. Similarly: Tanner, pp.224-5. Even Christopher Bennett, who argues that Rašković 'believed in the innate depravity of Croats', maintains that he was not 'determined to stir up trouble' and 'shied away from open confrontation with Zagreb'. Bennett, pp.126-7.

⁴⁹ Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.100, 146-7. Silber & Little, pp.97-8, 104. Caplan, p.118. Tanner, p.225. Hislope, *op. cit.*, pp.176-7. Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: the Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.187.

⁵⁰ Glenny, *op. cit.*, p.19. Judah, p.169. Donia, pp.74-5. Silber & Little, pp.97-8. Kubo, *op. cit.*, p.187.

⁵¹ Silber & Little, p.97. Also: Radan, p.178.

⁵² Bennett, p.127. Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.143. Caplan, p.117.

⁵³ With the exception of Philip Cohen, who claims that Rašković 'closely consulted' with Milošević. Philip Cohen, p.51. See, for example: Silber & Little, pp.95-7. Tanner, p.224. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, pp.54, 57.

⁵⁴ Silber & Little, p.97.

Milošević] were personally acquainted and that Babić's programme received the express approval of Milošević'.⁵⁵ Babić's radical strategy, moreover, is seen as Belgrade's strategy, which promoted and even insisted on radicalisation. Gagnon, for example, claims that the SDS's 'Association of Municipalities' was a part of Milošević's 'scenario', 'suddenly' 'imposed' from outside on SDS leaders who, until then, had been talking only of cultural autonomy.⁵⁶ Donia is the only major author to note that in April 1991 Babić and Milošević came into conflict over Krajina's declaration of annexation to Serbia - surely a highly relevant fact when considering Babić-Milošević relations. Yet Donia then asserts that Babić quickly brought his programme 'back into accord with Milošević's policies'.⁵⁷ Keiichi Kubo, meanwhile, appears to be alone in suggesting that Babić 'was not acting on behalf of Belgrade from the very outset'.⁵⁸

Belgrade's support is customarily considered key to the rise of Babić and his sidelining of Rašković. Christopher Bennett, for example, states simply that 'Milošević replaced Rašković with Milan Babić'.⁵⁹ The leaking of transcripts of Rašković's meeting with Tuđman in July 1990 and the demotion of the Serbs' status in the Croatian constitution have, however, also been seen as important factors weakening Rašković.⁶⁰ Hislope, for example, argues that 'Babić was as much a product of Tuđman as he was of Milošević'.⁶¹ Caspersen, meanwhile, additionally emphasises other factors, and whereas most authors place Babić's triumph sometime in autumn 1990, she notes the struggle continuing into spring 1991.⁶² She also underscores that Babić had actively sought Belgrade's support, and after consolidating his power 'began asserting his independence', presenting a more nuanced view of the relationship.⁶³

⁵⁵ Glenny, *op. cit.*, p.17. Also: Sell, p.117. Josip Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp.94, 148-9, 241.

⁵⁶ Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.142-3. Also: Caplan, p.119. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p.58.

⁵⁷ Donia, p.76.

⁵⁸ Kubo, 'The Radicalisation and Ethnicization of Elections: The 1990 Local Elections and the Ethnic Conflict in Croatia', *Ethnopolitics*, 6:1 (2007), p.38.

⁵⁹ Bennett, pp.136, 127. Similarly: Ramet, *op. cit.*, p.57. Caplan, p.118. Sell, p.117. Silber & Little, p.95. Donia, p.75.

⁶⁰ Silber & Little, p.97. Caplan, p.119. Meier, pp.153-4. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.64.

⁶¹ Hislope, *op. cit.*, p.185-6. Also: Woodward, p.170.

⁶² Caspersen, *op. cit.*. As opposed to: Silber & Little, pp.97-100. Radan, p.178. Bennett, p.127. Judah, pp.168-9. Glenny, *op. cit.*, p.17. Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.146-7.

⁶³ Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.58.

Because of the perceived distinctions between Rašković and Babić, the argument is often made that a Croat-Serb compromise was possible, and Belgrade's alleged decision to undermine Rašković was thus an important cause of the war (along with, many suggest, Zagreb's alleged failure to seriously negotiate with Rašković).⁶⁴ This is widely considered one of the key elements of Belgrade's interference in Croatia: not only did Serbia replace Rašković with Babić, showing the extent of its influence among the Serbs in Croatia, but it initiated, or stage-managed, the shift from cultural autonomy, minority rights and negotiations, to territorial autonomy, secession and armed rebellion, all of which are presented as thus having external, rather than internal, origins. Authors such as Richard Caplan therefore note that there was evidently 'broad support among Croatia's Serbs for dialogue with the Tuđman government, which Belgrade and its allies in the Krajina sought to undermine'.⁶⁵

The Rašković-Babić distinction seems to have become an accepted truth, and those 'multi-factor' or 'revisionist' works that do not emphasise or mention it are yet to offer an alternative account. This is despite the fact that very little evidence is provided of, for example, co-ordination between Babić and Milošević.⁶⁶ The words of Rašković himself are also notable by their absence. Typically only a few of his statements from spring and summer 1990 are cited. Yet Rašković was very vocal and politically active until his death in July 1992. Nikica Barić, author of a major study of the Serbian rebellion in Croatia, cites a wider range of Rašković's statements, but ultimately declines to offer a final assessment of his politics, concluding only that he was 'controversial' and in mid-1991 was 'sceptical' towards the politics of Milošević and Babić, possibly realising 'what horrors a war between Serbs and Croats could bring'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ For example: Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp.18-19. Silber & Little, pp.95-7. Hislope, *op. cit.*, pp.173-4, 185-6. Caplan, pp.117-8.

⁶⁵ Caplan, p.118. Also see Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.93-4.

⁶⁶ Hislope and Caspersen are also the only authors to have dealt with the Rašković-Babić issue in depth, though Roe also provides a review of the secondary literature on this topic. Roe, pp.102-8. Hislope, *op. cit.* Caspersen, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ Nikica Barić, *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj 1990.-1995* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing - Tehnička Knjiga, 2005), p.219.

In addition, whereas many authors mention the Rašković-Babić contest, only a few discuss other Croatian Serb leaders and their relations with Belgrade, such as Milan Martić or Goran Hadžić. Martić led the 'Balvan Revolution' and was Krajina's Minister of Interior until 1994, when he became its President. The authors of *Balkan Battlegrounds*⁶⁸ argue that he was Belgrade's 'chosen instrument', 'created' by Serbian state security (*Državna bezbednost*, DB) to be 'the military figurehead' of the Serb revolt in 1990.⁶⁹ Caspersen agrees, writing that Martić's police 'were organised by the Serbian security service' and 'took orders directly from Belgrade', although she does not analyse these relationships, or Belgrade's involvement in the security sector in Krajina.⁷⁰ Hadžić, leader of the East Slavonia Serbs and then RSK President from 1992 to 1993, has been positioned similarly in the very little that has been written about him: a 'typical product of DB work', a 'man from nowhere' who became RSK president as a 'pliant political tool for Milošević's men'.⁷¹

The 'Balvan Revolution' and the JNA

The 'Balvan Revolution' itself has yet to be analysed in any detail. Many prominent works argue that the Serbian rebellion was prepared in advance, by rebels 'armed, organised and directed by Belgrade'.⁷² They describe a massive 'covert shipment of arms into the Serb-populated regions of Croatia', ordered by Milošević and conducted by the Serbian Interior Ministry (*Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova*, MUP) - most notably the DB - and elements in the JNA.⁷³ Already in June 1990 MUP/DB operatives Franko "Frenki" Simatović and Radovan Stojicic "Badza" were allegedly infiltrated into

⁶⁸ The book is authored by unnamed CIA research analysts, and as such must be treated with a degree of caution, as it reflects the official position of the CIA.

⁶⁹ CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, p.26.

⁷⁰ Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.58. Similarly: Gow, *The Serbian Project*, p.81.

⁷¹ Judah, p.171. And: Gow, *The Serbian Project*, p.81. Caspersen and Barić discuss Hadžić's activities in 1994-5, pointing to his loyalty to Belgrade, but much less so the earlier period when he was leader of the Eastern Slavonians and then RSK President. Barić, *op. cit.*, p.472. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, pp.106, 114-6.

⁷² Silber & Little, p.97. And see the following footnotes.

⁷³ Sell, pp.116, 123.

Knin, to organise and arm Serbian rebel forces.⁷⁴ This mass arming is usually said to have taken place from spring or summer 1990 onwards (although Cviic and Gagnon suggest it began in 1989):⁷⁵ by August 1990 ‘Milošević’s gun-runners’ had ‘done [their] job well’; ‘Far from being defenceless’, the Knin Serbs ‘were well prepared’ and ‘could effectively pick and choose weapons from the JNA’s arsenal’.⁷⁶ Given that the Serbs were armed en masse before Croatian efforts to acquire arms, the notion of Serbian ‘aggression’, and Croatia’s defensive rationale, is commonly endorsed – and Croatian efforts to arm ‘were not enough to counter the work already done by Serbia’s SDB, the JNA and the SDS.’⁷⁷ It is notable that despite the boldness of these claims, few authors cite any specific evidence or sources for them.⁷⁸

The eruption of the rebellion on 17 August 1990 was simply the next stage in Belgrade’s plan: ‘Armed civilians suddenly emerged and set up barricades on the roads’.⁷⁹ Croatian police actions are not regarded as a cause of the rebellion; Gagnon, for example, explicitly states that Zagreb ‘made no move to stop [the Croatian Serb’s autonomy referendum], or to remove the barricades that Serbian forces had thrown up around the territory’: ‘despite Serbia’s accusations of a genocidal regime, Zagreb continued to moderate its rhetoric and act with “restraint”’.⁸⁰ The authors of *Balkan Battlegrounds*, in particular, regard the ‘Balvan Revolution’ as having been, in fact, an operation of the Serbian DB.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Judah, pp.170-1. Miloš Vasić, ‘The Yugoslav Army and Post-Yugoslav Armies’ in David Dyker and Ivan Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth* (New York: Longman, 1996), p.123. LeBor, pp.141-2. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, pp.25-33. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.84.

⁷⁵ Cviic, p.208. Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.80, 143-4. Judah, pp.170-1. Silber & Little, p.103. Tanner, p.225-33. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, pp.25-33. Lukić, p.54. Meier, p.150. Bennett, p.136. Ejub Šitkovic, ‘Croatia: The First War’, in Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway (eds), *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp.155, 162. Sell, p.116.

⁷⁶ Tanner, p.233. Bennett, p.136. Also: Judah, p.170-1.

⁷⁷ Judah, p.173. Similarly: Tanner, pp.234-5. Gagnon, pp.101, 144. Meier, p.155. LeBor, p.149. By contrast: Crnobrnja, pp.152, 169. Hudson, pp.77-98.

⁷⁸ *Balkan Battlegrounds* is a notable exception in this respect, but its sources are still mainly just Serbian press articles. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, pp.25-33.

⁷⁹ Cigar, p.60. Similarly: Bennett, p.130. Meier, pp.154-5. Lukić, p.54. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p.58.

⁸⁰ Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.94. Likewise: Lukić, p.54.

⁸¹ CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, pp.25-33.

It has also been argued that from spring 1991 onwards 'armed extremist groups from Serbia', such as the 'Chetniks'⁸² of Serbian radical Vojislav Šešelj, 'began to infiltrate the Serbian communities in Croatia, fanning the national paranoia already aflame and urging the Serbian population to arm'.⁸³ These were 'paramilitary forces armed, organised and sent' by Belgrade⁸⁴ to do Milošević's 'dirty work' for him,⁸⁵ 'terrorising both Serb and non-Serb populations' in Slavonia.⁸⁶ Thus, Eric Gordy maintains, the escalating conflict in the first half of 1991 was not a consequence of Croat-Serb tensions in Croatia, but of an 'administrative decision' by the regime in Belgrade.⁸⁷

Some authors, however, including some more 'orthodox' accounts which describe Belgrade's alleged arming of the rebels, assert that Croatian police actions also helped precipitate the rebellion. Silber and Little maintain that Croatia 'had undertaken to prevent [the Serbs'] referendum', and on 17 August 'used force, or at least a show of force... to try to stamp its will on the rebel regions'.⁸⁸ The authors of *Balkan Battlegrounds*, as well as Crnobrnja and Susan Woodward, meanwhile, argue that Croatia's 'heavy-handed efforts to dominate the police force... poured salt on an open wound and enraged ethnic Serbs everywhere',⁸⁹ while Miroslav Hadžić goes so far as to say that in its determination 'to quell the 'Balvan Revolution' by force, the new Croatian government gave the Serbs the justification to use force to protect

⁸² Chetnik (*Četnik*) was the name given to Serbian nationalist militias active during the Second World War, loosely affiliated with Draža Mihailović. Formally an anti-Axis resistance movement, they have been accused of collaboration with the occupiers against the communist Partisans, as well as being associated with 'Greater Serbian' ideas and genocidal crimes against Croats and Muslims. In socialist Yugoslavia, particularly Croatia, the Chetniks were effectively regarded as the Serbian Ustaše.

⁸³ Štitković, p.157. Also: Brendan O'Shea, *Perception and Reality in the Modern Yugoslav Conflict* (Taylor & Francis, 2007), p.9.

⁸⁴ Judah, p.177.

⁸⁵ Ognjen Pribičević, 'Changing Fortunes of the Serbian Radical Right', in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p.197. And: Sell, pp.137-8. Judah, pp.185-9. Tanner, p.245.

⁸⁶ Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.105.

⁸⁷ Gordy, *The Culture of Power*, pp.43-4.

⁸⁸ Silber & Little, pp.100-1, 103. Also: Kubo, 'The Radicalisation and Ethnicization of Elections', p.33. Hannes Grandits & Carolin Leutloff, 'Discourses, actors, violence: the organisation of war-escalation in the Krajina region of Croatia 1990-1' in Jan Koehler & Christopher Zurcher (eds), *Potentials of Disorder* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp.30-31.

⁸⁹ CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.1*, p.83. Crnobrnja, p.152. Woodward, p.137. Also: Gow, *op. cit.*, p.19. Hislope, *op. cit.*, p.211. Pavković, p.129.

themselves.⁹⁰ Moreover, while some authors emphasise the external origin and staged nature of this rebellion,⁹¹ others argue that it also had local origins. Hannes Grandits and Carolin Leutloff, for example, argue that the rebellion was motivated by 'intense fear' and was seen 'as an act of self-defence' (although this fear 'did not [necessarily] correspond to a real threat').⁹² Kubo, similarly, emphasises that the conflict clearly had local as well as external origins, as the first rebels consisted of local policemen.⁹³ 'Revisionist' authors, meanwhile, focus on Croatian arming and organising as a counter to the focus on the Serbs - but are yet to offer any alternative account of the arming of the Croatian Serbs.⁹⁴

The agenda of the JNA has also been interpreted in vastly different fashions. Jović argues that until a fairly late stage, the army was 'hesitant to accept the end of Yugoslavia' and 'still wanted to "defeat" the Croatian and Slovenian nationalists and to preserve Yugoslavia's unity';⁹⁵ Miloš Vasić suggests that the JNA was thinking along these lines up to August 1991.⁹⁶ Some posit that it was around March 1991 that the JNA abandoned this goal;⁹⁷ others that the Milošević-JNA alliance went back years, with federal defence secretary 'Kadijević and Milošević... in complete agreement that the old federation was finished and that the future lay in a smaller Yugoslavia which would unite all Serbs in one state'.⁹⁸

Regardless of its precise ambitions, however, the JNA is usually seen as pro-Serb, and as complicit in the Serbian rebellion in 1990-91.⁹⁹ Escalating Serb-Croat clashes and JNA interventions to 'separate the warring sides' in the first half of 1991, meanwhile, are

⁹⁰ Miroslav Hadžić, *The Yugoslav Peoples' Agony* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.141.

⁹¹ For example: Sell, p.117. Gagnon, *op. cit.*, p.94.

⁹² Grandits & Leutloff, pp.28-9.

⁹³ Kubo, 'The Radicalisation and Ethnicization of Elections', pp.32-3, 37-8.

⁹⁴ For example: Hudson, pp.77-98.

⁹⁵ Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.358-60.

⁹⁶ Vasić, p.127.

⁹⁷ Florian Bieber, 'The Role of the Yugoslav People's Army in the Dissolution of Yugoslavia: The Army without a State?', in Cohen & Dragović-Soso (eds), p.323. Judah, p.175. Silber & Little, p.145. Sell, p.136-7.

⁹⁸ Tanner, p.226. Also: Bennett, p.130. Lukic, p.54.

⁹⁹ For example: Lukic, p.54. Tanner, p.238. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p.58.

often located as part of Milošević's master plan for Serb occupation of 'Serb territories' in Croatia. Silber and Little, for example, describe a 'familiar pattern' of rebel Serbs provoking conflict and the army 'protecting renegade Serb areas' - 'Under a cloak of impartiality', helping create a Greater Serbia.¹⁰⁰ By contrast, 'revisionist' accounts - and also some others, such as the largely 'orthodox' *Balkan Battlegrounds* - present JNA interventions as having genuinely impartial intentions.¹⁰¹

Milošević's Intentions

Serbia has been ascribed a pivotal, and highly direct, role in instigating the Serbian rebellion and the descent into conflict in Croatia, through a variety of means. There is, however, considerable divergence in interpretations of Milošević's intentions – what his exact goals were, and the extent to which he was implementing a premeditated strategy. Authors such as Bennett, Cigar and Bogdan Denitch, for example, have argued that Milošević was pursuing a 'Greater Serbia' for years before Yugoslavia's breakup.¹⁰² Sell's position is, however, more common: Milošević was pursuing 'a careful and well-planned strategy', but this was initially aimed at dominating Yugoslavia, and only subsequently at 'using armed force to create a separate Serb state'.¹⁰³ Sell suggests that the 'Yugoslav option' was abandoned by spring or summer 1990.¹⁰⁴ Gagnon agrees, and both maintain that, thence onwards, Milošević had a deliberate 'strategy of destroying Yugoslavia' to achieve his goals.¹⁰⁵ It is even suggested that Milošević had a 'tacit' alliance with the Slovenian leadership, which sought Slovenia's independence from Yugoslavia, to this end.¹⁰⁶ Jović also locates the shift from the 'Yugoslav option' in the

¹⁰⁰ Silber and Little, pp.135, 170. Also: Judah, pp.174.-7. Tanner, pp.241-7, 253-5. LeBor, p.150. Cviic, p.208. Meier, p.175.

¹⁰¹ For example: Hudson, pp.92-8. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.1*, p.92.

¹⁰² Bennett, p.124. Cigar, p.57. Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.42.

¹⁰³ Sell, pp.4-5.

¹⁰⁴ Sell, pp.108-10.

¹⁰⁵ Gagnon, *op. cit.*, pp.92-3. Sell, p.127.

¹⁰⁶ Sell, p.128. Silber and Little, pp.113-4.

first half of 1990.¹⁰⁷ Others, however, place it later,¹⁰⁸ and authors such as Toni Petkovic and Gordy even claim that Milošević's alternative to Yugoslavia was never thought-out or planned in advance.¹⁰⁹ Gordy, indeed, though generally an 'orthodox' writer, doubts whether Milošević ever really had a long-term plan: he was simply 'carried by events' and, beyond his resolution to use force in Serbian interests, 'did not know what he was getting into'.¹¹⁰

Milošević and Tuđman's negotiations in 1991, most famously in Karadžorđevo on 25 March, have provoked similarly differing interpretations. There have long been rumours of a 'Karadžorđevo agreement' between the two presidents, relating to a division of Bosnia and possibly Milošević's renunciation of the Krajina. Authors differ, however, on the extent to which they believe an agreement was reached, and how this related to developments in Croatia in 1991. Drago Kovačević argues that there was an agreement, but because it was difficult for Milošević to openly abandon the Krajina Serbs the two presidents opted for a 'controlled war', whose ultimate aim was the violent partition of Bosnia and the departure of the Krajina Serbs.¹¹¹ Adam LeBor, similarly, maintains that even at the peak of the war in 1991 there was probably 'some kind of understanding' between the two leaders.¹¹² Most accounts, however, suggest that whilst the two leaders found much common ground over Bosnia, agreeing 'firmly in principle' on its division, they failed to agree over the fate of Croatia's Serbs.¹¹³ It is – nevertheless - often suggested that these talks led Tuđman to underestimate the Serb threat to Croatia.¹¹⁴ This is seen as the result of deliberate deception by Milošević, who, as Dušan Viro suggests, 'hooked' Tuđman onto the division of Bosnia through false promises of renouncing the

¹⁰⁷ Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.358, 360.

¹⁰⁸ Meier, p.162. Silber & Little, pp.26, 114, 117, 128.

¹⁰⁹ Toni Petković, 'Fight for Great Serbia: Myth and Reality', *Center for Southeast Europe, Working Paper Series 3* (2009), pp.4-5. Gordy, 'Destruction of the Yugoslav Federation', pp.296-7. Similarly: Gow, *op. cit.*, p.19. Lukić, pp.61-2. Cohen, pp.207-8.

¹¹⁰ Gordy, *op. cit.*, pp.296-7.

¹¹¹ Drago Kovačević, *Kavez - Krajina u dogovorenom ratu* (Belgrade: Srpski Demokratski Forum, 2003), pp.60-4.

¹¹² LeBor, p.168. Similarly: Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milošević: Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), pp.88-9, 218.

¹¹³ Glenny, *op. cit.*, p.149. Sell, p.119. Silber & Little, pp.131-2. Judah, pp.174, 283-4. Similarly: Tanner, pp.242-3.

¹¹⁴ Silber & Little, p.32. Meier, pp.167-8. Magas, *op. cit.*, p.121.

Croatian Serbs, in order to prevent a Croat-Muslim alliance and undermine Croatian defence preparations.¹¹⁵ An alternative view is presented by Ivo Lučić, however, who dismisses talk of a 'Karadžorđevo agreement', either real or deceptive, as propaganda from Tuđman's opponents.¹¹⁶

As with the Rašković-Babić distinction, most authors deal with Karadžorđevo only briefly. Minić, Lučić and Hudelist offer more detailed and comprehensive discussions.¹¹⁷ But they failed to use some key sources, such as Tuđman's interview for the BBC's 'Death of Yugoslavia' project, and could not, of course, consider the many other sources that have become available in the past decade.

This holds true for the literature in general. Although in recent years more work has been done on the conflict in Croatia, most notably by Caspersen, Kubo and Croatian scholars such as Barić, Davor Marijan and Ivica Miškulin, many topics are still not well served by scholars. Different authors present, for instance, the 'Balvan Revolution' very differently, but typically do so in just a few sentences, with little analysis or engagement with evidence supporting contrary interpretations. A major aim of this thesis is therefore to hone in on some of these under-investigated but contested topics, in the hope of narrowing the gap between different interpretations and contributing to greater understanding of some of the basic elements of the descent into conflict in Croatia.

The 'orthodox' view of Milošević's role in the break-up of Yugoslavia remains popular to this day, with authors such as Marko Attila Hoare and Josip Glaurdić being outspoken advocates of it.¹¹⁸ It was adopted by the ICTY Prosecution in key cases such as the trial

¹¹⁵ Dušan Viro, *Slobodan Milošević: Anatomija Zlocina* (Zagreb: Profil, 2007), pp.150-5. Also see: Darko Hudelist, *Tuđman – biografija* (Zagreb: Profil, 2004), pp.689-710.

¹¹⁶ Ivo Lučić, 'Karadžorđevo: politčki mit ili dogovor?', *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, God. 35, br. 1 (2003), pp.7-36. Ivo Lučić, 'The View from Bosnia and Herzegovina on Franjo Tuđman's "Bosnian Policy"', *Review of Croatia History*, No. 1 (6/2010), pp.75-80. Similarly: Sabrina Ramet, 'Confronting the Past: The Slovenes as Subjects and Objects of History', *Družboslovne Razprave*, 24 (58) (2008), p.41. Josip Glaurdić, 'Inside the Serbian War Machine: The Milošević Telephone Intercepts, 1991-1992', *East European Politics and Societies*. Vol. 23, No. 1 (February 2009), p.93.

¹¹⁷ Miloš Minić, *Dogovori u Karadžorđevu o podeli Bosne i Hercegovine* (Sarajevo: Rabis, 1998). Lučić, *op. cit.* Lučić, 'Karadžorđevo'. Hudelist, *Tuđman*, pp.689-710.

¹¹⁸ See, for example: Marko Attila Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books, 2004). Glaurdić, *op.*

of Milošević, and has also been popular with the Western media (particularly during and since the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999). In the past decade in particular, however, there has been an increasing number of scholarly works which have brought into question more key aspects of this 'orthodox' interpretation. Nebojša Vladislavljević, for example, offers a radical revision of our understanding of Milošević's rise to power and the 'anti-bureaucratic revolution' in Serbia in the late 1980s, convincingly arguing that Milošević had much less control over this than is usually assumed, allying himself with a largely autonomous Serbian protest movement rather than engineering it all as part of a grand plan.¹¹⁹ Janine N. Clark has vigorously questioned the dominant view of Milošević as a warmonger and criminal leader, noting the limits of his influence and misrepresentations of his speeches.¹²⁰ Jović has also convincingly explained the Croatian and Slovenian 'confederal' proposal of 1990-91 as entailing the (peaceful) break-up of Yugoslavia into independent states, rather than a looser federation as presented by many other authors.¹²¹ In his recent biography of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, meanwhile, Donia notes that he has abandoned his former view of Milošević as an advocate of 'Greater Serbia', and describes in detail how Karadžić operated independently of Belgrade.¹²² Former ICTY researcher Marko Prelec, similarly, argues that the Prosecution in the Milošević case presented a false view of his politics and that the evidence produced indicated, instead, the limits of Milošević's influence on events on the other side of the Drina, while Caspersen has concluded that, over time, the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs 'were able to curtail Milošević's influence and became increasingly independent', particularly in the latter case.¹²³ At the same time, however, Caspersen largely concurs with the dominant view of Belgrade's role in the earlier period, that 'in the immediate prewar period and in the first years of war, Belgrade's

cit.

¹¹⁹ Nebojša Vladislavljević, *Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹²⁰ Janine N. Clark, *Serbia in the Shadow of Milošević: the legacy of conflict in the Balkans* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008) pp.53-4, 90-1.

¹²¹ Dejan Jović, 'The Slovenian-Croatian Confederal Proposal: A Tactical Move or an Ultimate Solution?', in Cohen & Dragović-Soso (eds), pp.249-80. Also see: Hayden, pp.54-64.

¹²² Donia, pp.76, 81, 209.

¹²³ Marko Prelec, 'Body of Evidence: The Prosecution's Construction of Milošević', in Timothy William Waters (ed), *The Milošević Trial: An Autopsy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.356-76. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.31.

influence was very tangible',¹²⁴ while Prelec emphasises the distinction between Milošević's relationships with the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, claiming that he was able to '[swap] members of the Croatian Serb government like a coach rotating his players'.¹²⁵

Most of the arguments of this thesis strengthen such 'multi-factor' or 'revisionist' approaches, though they call into question the continued emphasis on Serbia's influence over the Serbs in Croatia in 1990-91. As will be seen, this follows from a critical analysis of both old and new primary sources.

¹²⁴ Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.31.

¹²⁵ Prelec, p.364.

1.2. Sources and Methods

This thesis is based above all on primary sources: personal accounts, documents, and media. Personal accounts include testimonies at ICTY, published memoirs and diaries, interviews conducted in 1994-95 for the BBC's *Death of Yugoslavia* documentary and book, and my own interviews, conducted in Serbia and Croatia from 2007 to 2011. Documents are primarily from the archive of the former RSK, published by the Croatian Memorial and Documentation Centre (HMDC-DR), and exhibits at the ICTY, which come from a wide variety of sources, including the Croatian and Serbian state archives. Contemporary domestic media employed is primarily *Borba*, *Danas*, *NIN* and *Intervju*, as well as translations by the Foreign Bureau Information Service (FBIS).

At the ICTY, the conflict in Croatia has been extensively covered in the trials of Milošević, Martić, Babić, Hadžić, Serbian DB officials Stanišić/Simatović and others. Witness testimonies are generally extensive and detailed. From one key witness (and indictee), Milan Babić, we not only have twenty-three days of testimonies in three trials, but also his extensive pre-testimony interviews with the Prosecution (OTP, Office of the Prosecutor).¹²⁶ We also have the benefit of these witnesses being asked to comment on documents and being cross-examined. In addition to this, the BBC interviewed 87 high ranking Yugoslav and international figures in 1994-95, including many of the key figures in the Croatian conflict, while I have conducted in-depth interviews with 46 individuals in Serbia and Croatia, mostly former politicians (principally of the SDS and Krajina), but also some army and intelligence chiefs, journalists, and others.¹²⁷ Interviewees were selected by interest and availability. I aimed to be as comprehensive as possible, often interviewing several times in order to clarify and cross-check information in detail. My most extensive interviews, with Dušan Orlović, the first head of the Krajina DB (1991-92), spanned more than sixteen hours in total.

¹²⁶ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.1.-2.36 (Babić Interviews).

¹²⁷ See Bibliography for a full list of my own interviews, and information on BBC-DOY and RFE's.

This wide range of accounts enables extensive cross-checking of information, and provides a fascinating insight into the motivations and perceptions of key actors at the time, as well as information on the numerous aspects of the conflict that were not publicly discussed and for which documentation is lacking – such as Krajina leaders' contacts with Milošević or the Tuđman-Milošević negotiations. As key actors such as Milošević were highly secretive in how they operated – even in private, confidential meetings of the state leadership, he would sometimes lie about sensitive topics to his colleagues, or deliberately avoid discussing them to avoid a written record – insider accounts can be a vital source of information.¹²⁸

There are, of course, problems with using personal accounts, given years after the events in question, and many are quite evidently self-serving. At the ICTY witnesses also often have a clear incentive to be dishonest: to protect a former ally or political position; to condemn a former opponent; to avoid trial themselves; or to gain favours, such as relocation and a new identity, from the Prosecution. Indeed, several of my own interviewees were defence witnesses at The Hague, and gave much more one-sided accounts there than in person.¹²⁹ As detailed later in the thesis, moreover, some key Prosecution witnesses, such as Milan Babić, have also given very questionable accounts.

Because of these reliability issues, most of the information presented in this thesis has been cross-verified with multiple sources, whose reliability has been individually assessed. Thanks to the ICTY and the HMDC-DR, we now have access to thousands of sensitive documents that would not normally have been available for decades, if at all (including minutes of meetings of the state leaderships, and party, police and intelligence reports), and the use of such contemporary documentation, and media from all sides, balances well against the pitfalls of participants' accounts.

¹²⁸ See, for example: ICTY-Perišić: E-P02933-5 (Mladić Diary, December 1993); E-P782.E (Supreme Defence Council minutes, 7/2/1994), pp.56-60; Judgement (6/9/1011), pp.413-23; E-P00803.E (Interview Momčilo Perišić, 8/12/2003), p.10; E-P00807.E (Interview Momčilo Perišić, 9/3/2009), p.9.

¹²⁹ For example, former RSK Foreign Minister Slobodan Jarčević.

The war in Croatia and the disintegration of Yugoslavia are often used as case studies for the construction and testing of different theories of ethnic and civil conflicts.¹³⁰ Such theory-focused works often suffer from a limited understanding of the cases themselves, however, while the great divergences in interpretations of every aspect of these cases has meant that authors have been able to construct completely opposing arguments from the same secondary works.¹³¹ This thesis does not attempt to offer a new theory of the conflict, or to confirm or refute the many existing ones. Instead, it aims to contribute to our understanding of certain key issues, leading to findings which may in turn aid our engagement with these different theoretical approaches.

The popular concept of 'security dilemmas' is worth some consideration, however. Originally a theory of International Relations (IR) that sought to explain inter-state conflicts, authors such as Barry Posen, Stuart Kaufman and Paul Roe have applied this concept to conflicts between ethnic/national groups *within* states, and specifically the Yugoslav and Croatian cases. In brief, actions taken to increase physical and/or societal security - by, for example, acquiring arms and limiting opportunities for national minority expression - are seen as aggressive rather than defensive moves by others, prompting similar moves in an escalating spiral of reaction and counter-reaction.¹³² Ali Bilgic has developed this concept further, and moved it away from a tendency towards determinism, by emphasising the agency of the actors involved (in, for example, defining the ways in which security is conceived and the means of achieving it are identified).¹³³ Esther Visser and Isabelle Duyvesteyn have recently challenged this use of the 'security dilemma' concept, insisting on a strict definition whereby the perception of a 'threat' must be a misperception - whereas, they maintain, in the Croatian case

¹³⁰ For example: James Fearson, 'Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem', *Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association* (New York, 30/8-2/9/1994). Gagnon, *op. cit.*

¹³¹ See, for example: Ali Bilgic, 'Towards a new societal security dilemma: comprehensive analysis of actor responsibility in intersocietal conflicts', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 1 (January 2013), pp.185-206. Esther Visser & Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 'The Irrelevance of the Security Dilemma for Civil Wars', *Civil Wars*, Vol. 16, Issue 1 (2014), pp.65-85.

¹³² Barry Posen, 'The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict', *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp.27-47. Roe, *op. cit.*

¹³³ Bilgic.

genuine security threats existed.¹³⁴ The extent to which threats exist, how significant those threats are, and how one should achieve security is always a matter of interpretation (and contestation), however, and defensive measures taken in response to a minor threat may, for example, make that threat more substantial. The security dilemma has been applied to ethnic/national conflicts as a looser concept whereby actions intended to improve one's security, i.e. that are fundamentally defensive, end up increasing one's insecurity, because others perceive them as aggressive and respond in kind. This thesis make use of this looser concept of a security dilemma. For although, as Roe acknowledges, 'security dilemmas' may not be able to explain how a conflict situation arises in the first place, they do encapsulate one important means by which a conflict may escalate, and can help to account for certain developments in Croatia well.

¹³⁴ Visser & Duyvesteyn.

1.3. Thesis Roadmap

The central focus of this thesis is to investigate the extent to which the Serbian rebellion in Croatia in 1990-91 was orchestrated by Milošević and the authorities of the Republic of Serbia, or arose from an autonomous and independent movement(s) among Serbs in Croatia. The thesis homes in on the relationships between Belgrade and Croatian Serb political and military/paramilitary leaders, as well as considering the nuances of Serbian policy towards Croatia in this period. A conventional historical methodology is used, with a focus on the ideologies and roles of certain key individuals (such as Milošević, Rašković and Babić). This is not to suggest that the short-term decision making of these political elites was the fundamental cause of the war, or that the role of individuals was decisive, and that they were not themselves constrained and limited in their freedom of action. But the decisions and perspectives of these individuals certainly did have significant influence, and, most importantly, they acted as representatives of certain factions and trends in Croatia and Serbia.

In order to provide an in-depth investigation of Belgrade's role, the role of the Croatian side in the descent into conflict is not a fundamental point of investigation and analysis. Although this thesis does explore Croat-Serb interactions within Croatia as an alternative explanation for certain developments, it does not seek to cover, for example, the extent to which Serb fears for their rights in an independent Croatia were grounded. Instead, the main focus of investigation is on the most neglected, or unchallenged, aspects of Brubaker's 'triadic nexus': the agency of the Croatian Serbs, and their relationship with Serbia.

It is for this reason that I also partly put aside one purported component of Milošević's 'attack' on Croatia: the Serbian state media's nationalist and one-sided portrayal of developments in Croatia. A fruitful analysis of the role of the Serbian media requires a much wider investigation of the situation in Croatia at the time, including the extent to which, for example, Serbian press allegations against Zagreb had a basis in reality. One

important means of indirect Serbian involvement in developments in Croatia is thus not fully covered by this thesis; the most direct alleged forms of involvement, are, however, examined. The reasons behind the rise of the SDS and its sidelining of rivals (mostly former communist Serbs) over the course of 1990-91 are also partly put aside for the same reason – this issue is too connected to Croatian politics to consider separately.

Chronological boundaries must also be noted: this thesis looks at the descent into war, rather than the war itself, and thus concerns primarily the period from the beginning of the Serbian movement in Croatia in 1989-90 to the start of the onset of the war proper, around summer 1991. Analysis of Belgrade's relationship with the Croatian Serbs extends slightly further, cutting off in early 1992, before the adoption of the Vance plan and the creation of the RSK, which began a new era in those relationships. Examination of later periods is, however, occasionally employed to shed further light on these topics.

It is also worth recording that, although I sometimes refer to 'Serbs in Croatia' or 'Croatian Serbs', I am concerned principally with a section of the Serbs in Croatia, those of the largely rural Serb-majority Krajina and mixed Slavonia. A full third of Serbs lived in overwhelmingly Croatian cities, such as Zagreb, Zadar and Rijeka. Many of these Serbs were 'culturally 'Croatized'',¹³⁵ and they tended to hold very different views from their rural co-nationals. Polls conducted in 1990-91 revealed major cleavages among Croatian Serbs, with approximately a third supporting the SDS's nationalist politics and a third opposing, a division that seems to have been largely geographic – Serbs in the Krajina supporting, and in the large cities opposing.¹³⁶ For a variety of reasons, the voice of 'urban Serbs' was not well represented in Croatia in 1990-91, but there was, even then, a whole spectrum of Croatian Serb opinion, including a minority of highly pro-

¹³⁵ Croatian Serb intellectual Drago Roksanđić cited by Gale Stokes, 'From Nation to Minority: Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia at the Outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars', *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 52, no. 6 (2005), p.5.

¹³⁶ See poll data published by Dejan Jović in *Danas*, on 16/12/1989, 26/6/1990, 3/7/1990, 31/7/1990, 7/8/1990, 4/9/1990, 2/10/1990, 6/11/1990, 4/12/1990, 1/1/1991, 5/2/1991, 5/3/1991, 9/4/1991, 7/5/1991, 11/6/1991 and 30/7/1991, and Marinko Čulić, 'Trčanje ispod duge', *Danas*, 18/6/1991, pp.7-9.

Croatian Serbs active in Croatian nationalist parties.¹³⁷ Rather than Serbian politics in Croatia in general, this thesis focuses on the Serbian rebellion in Croatia, which took place in the Krajina and Slavonia, and, for this reason, I do not examine the stances and roles of other Serbs spread throughout Croatia.

This thesis examines the evolving ideology of Rašković and the SDS (**Chapter 2**); the gradual descent into conflict between the SDS and the Croatian authorities over the course of 1990, including the eruption of the Serbian rebellion in Krajina and the militarisation of the conflict (**Chapter 3**); the Serbian leadership's views, strategies and proposals with regard to Croatia in this period, including its attitude to, and involvement in, the descent into conflict, its relationship with the JNA, and the latter's involvement in these developments (**Chapter 4**); the arming of the Serbs in Croatia (**Chapter 5**); Serbia's relationship with the SDS and its leaders, most notably Rašković and Babić, and its involvement in their factional struggle (**Chapter 6**); Belgrade's relationship with the Serbian rebels in the Krajina, particularly their main leader Milan Martić (**Chapter 7**); and Belgrade's involvement in the political and military/security sector among Serbs in Eastern Slavonia, a region quite distinct from the Krajina (**Chapter 8**).

¹³⁷ For example: Srećko Bjelić of the 'Coalition of National Understanding' and Croatian People's Party (a key figure of the 'Croatian Spring'/'Mass Movement' (*Maspok*) of 1970-71); Božo Kovačević of the Croatian Social-Liberal Party; and Đorđe Pribičević, vice-president of the Croatian Democratic Party, later an advisor to President Tuđman himself.

Chapter 2: Jovan Rašković, the Serbian Democratic Party and the 'Serbian Question' in Croatia

Many key arguments about the conflict in Croatia have relied on certain understandings of the programme of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and in particular the agenda of the party's founding president Jovan Rašković. It is often argued that Rašković made only moderate demands, such as cultural autonomy, but was undermined by Belgrade, which favoured instead the territorial and separatist politics of Milan Babić.¹ This has also been argued by some former associates of Rašković, including influential Serbian nationalist author Dobrica Ćosić.² Seen this way, Rašković represented a missed opportunity for compromise, which, if Belgrade (and, some suggest, Zagreb) had acted less maliciously, may not have been squandered.

This chapter considers this view by analysing the evolving programme of the SDS and its proposals for how to resolve the 'Serbian question' in Croatia. To what extent were the party's leaders ever prepared to accept a solution within an independent Croatia, or a Croatia in a confederal Yugoslavia? How did the proposals of Rašković and Babić differ, and what was Rašković's attitude towards secession from Croatia – was he prepared to compromise to avoid war?

Two caveats must be registered. Firstly, this chapter considers only whether SDS leaders ever seriously considered negotiating a solution in Croatia given the way events developed, with the election of the HDZ and the policies it then conducted. It does not examine, whether, for example, they would have made more moderate proposals had there been a more moderate Croatian leadership. Secondly, this chapter uses terms such as 'separatist' to describe proposals for territories to secede from the Republic of Croatia. The Serbs of course argued that it was the Croats who were 'separatists' and

¹ For example: Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp.18-19. Silber & Little, pp.95-8. Hislope, pp.173-4, 185-6. Caplan, pp.117-8. Donia, *Karadžić*, pp.74-5.

² See, for example: Jovan Kesar, 'Jovan Rašković', *Večernji Novosti*, 5/9/2007, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.krajinaforce.com.

that Serbs were just opting to remain in Yugoslavia. The word does, nevertheless, accurately denote the action of territories separating from Croatia, regardless of the cause or the ultimate destinies of either side.

The SDS, like the HDZ, was more a movement than a political party with strictly defined goals, and from the outset different leaders and factions within the party had different goals and agendas. (Even before the SDS was officially formed, there were threats of splits over the party's name.)³ Attention is therefore paid to the differences between SDS factions. In 1990 Rašković was certainly the dominant personality and ideologue of the movement, however, and so the party's programme is first examined primarily as he presented it. The chapter will then proceed to consider the perspectives of other SDS factions, the differences between Rašković and Babić, and their disagreements in 1991.

The SDS: A Brief Overview

The Serbian Democratic Party, conceived as representing the interests of Serbs in Croatia, was formed in Knin on 17 February 1990, with the Šibenik psychiatrist Rašković its president. The party won control of some Serb-majority municipalities near Knin in the April-May 1990 multi-party elections, and afterwards established an Association of Municipalities to unite them. Asserting constitutional amendments adopted by the Croatian assembly on 25 July were anti-Serbian, at a mass rally held on the same day a Serbian National Council (*Srpsko nacionalno vijeće*, SNV) was created. It was headed by Milan Babić, the president of Knin municipality and the Association. A 'Declaration on the Sovereignty and Autonomy of the Serbian Nation in Croatia' was adopted.⁴ In December 1990 Croatia then passed a new constitution, demoting the Serbs' constitutional status, and in Knin the Association was transformed into the Serbian Autonomous Province of Krajina (*Srpska autonomna oblast Krajina*, SAOK).

³ Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Organisational Secretary of SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 5/8/2007); Branko Marijanović, Vice-President of SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 7/11/2007).

⁴ ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990).

Initially the Knin economist Jovan Opačić was the de facto number two in the SDS, but he was rapidly sidelined by Babić, who had taken that mantle by autumn. By the end of 1990 the ambitious Babić also came into conflict with Rašković. Babić would go on to lead SAOK into secession and war with Croatia. In spring 1991 he formed a separate SDS Regional Board for Krajina, which in 1992 formally became a new party, the SDS Krajina. Rašković, still formally president of the SDS, was gradually pushed aside and withdrew to Belgrade, where he died from a heart attack in July 1992.

The SDS Programme: Key Elements

There were three key elements to the SDS's national programme: the party supported Yugoslav federalism and opposed a confederation; it insisted that the Serbs in Croatia were a nation with the same rights as Croats, including the right to self-determination; and it argued that the existing status of Serbs in Croatia was inadequate, and that further rights, including some form of Serbian autonomy, was necessary.

The SDS was firmly committed to the maintenance of Yugoslavia, arguing that 'the fate of the Serbian people in Croatia depends on democratic federalism'.⁵ The borders between republics were only administrative, not state borders, and the creation of a confederation, which would divide the Serbian people between many separate states and potentially leave them threatened by 'the politics of genocide', was against the interests of the Serb people.⁶ The SDS also favoured a strengthening of the federal element in Yugoslavia, with, for example, the first chamber of the federal parliament being elected not by the republics but directly by citizens on the basis of 'one man, one vote'.⁷

⁵ ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/2/1990), p.11.

⁶ Z. Tarle, 'How Čubrilović Welcomed Franjo', *Borba*, 22/3/1990, p.13, in FBIS-EEU-90-063, 2/4/1990. Also: Časlav Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991* (Belgrade: Sava Mrkalj & Zora, 1996), pp.41-42, retrieved from www.krajinaforce.com. Interview Branko Marijanović, Vice-President of SDS 1990-91 (Belgrade: 7/11/2007).

⁷ ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/2/1990), pp.11, 15.

Secondly, at the core of SDS ideology was the belief that Serbs in Croatia were a 'sovereign nation' equal to the Croats, not a national minority in a Croatian state. The Serbs in Croatia were living on 'their historic territories' where they had 'lived for centuries and before the creation of the state of Croatia',⁸ territories which were 'always Serbian' and 'never Croatian'.⁹ Croatia, Rašković argued, was 'a state of Serbian and Croatian territories',¹⁰ and the Serbian nation there possessed 'all the rights of a political nation'.¹¹ As 'Nations can secede, and not states' then the Serbian nation had the right to self-determination, to independently 'determine with whom it will live, in what regime it will live and how it will connect with other nations in Yugoslavia'.¹² This view was shared by all the leading figures in the SDS, including moderates such as Vojislav Vukčević, who was forced out of the party in spring 1991.¹³

Finally, the SDS argued that Serbs in the Socialist Republic of Croatia were in an unequal position, subject to cultural assimilation and economic neglect, with equal rights only on paper.¹⁴ It was therefore necessary to introduce Serbian rights and autonomy in Croatia. As will be demonstrated, however, the exact nature of the rights and autonomy demanded, and the question of how the party would react to the confederalisation of Yugoslavia or creation of an independent Croatia, was always ambiguous, and became more radical over time.

⁸ ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990). Also: Jovan Rašković, *Luda zemlja* (Belgrade: Akvarijus, 1990), p.252.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.245.

¹⁰ Jovan Rašković, *Duša i sloboda* (Novi Sad: Slavija, 1995), pp.141, 227.

¹¹ Rašković, 'Primjedbe na nacrt Ustava Repbulike Hrvatske', 11/12/1990 (author's copy), p.1.

¹² ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990).

¹³ Interview Vojislav Vukčević, Vice-President of SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade, 27/7/2007 and 1/8/2007). V. Ilić, 'Nisam ja izdajica', *Borba*, 22/4/1991.

¹⁴ See for example: Marinko Čulić, 'Čega se boje Srbi', *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15.

2.1. Jovan Rašković

Jovan Rašković never issued a clear programmatic document. The SDS's initial party programme mostly spoke generally about the principles of democracy, and contained nothing on the key question of how the party would respond to a confederation or independence.¹⁵ Rašković's 1990 book *Luda zemlja* (Mad Country) is a collection of various extracts from his speeches, interviews and articles up to September 1990. It is not comprehensive, and subsequent major shifts in his rhetoric are absent. The posthumously published *Duša i sloboda* (Soul and Freedom) covers a wider period, up to his death in 1992, and is also an eclectic collection of interviews, articles and other documents.¹⁶

The real challenge in analysing Rašković, however, is the ambiguity and inconsistency of his rhetoric. He could apparently contradict himself on key issues in the space of sentences.¹⁷ The Croatian government pointed to the confused nature of Serb demands, and during Rašković's meeting with Tuđman in July, Tuđman's adviser Slaven Letica asked Rašković if he even knew himself what he wanted.¹⁸ Babić's former deputy Lazar Macura argues that Rašković in fact 'didn't have a real viewpoint, it was just changing based on the situation'.¹⁹ To some extent this was true – Rašković rarely wrote speeches in advance, and admitted that he often said what would be popular with the crowd, even if he disagreed with it.²⁰ Despite his pacifist and anti-war inclinations, for example,

¹⁵ ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/02/1990).

¹⁶ Unhelpfully, all extracts in *Luda zemlja* are also undated, while many in *Duša i sloboda* are undated or dated incorrectly. It has been possible, however, to work out when most of them are from.

¹⁷ For example: Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.309-10.

¹⁸ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.311.

¹⁹ Interview with Lazar Macura, Vice-President of Knin, 1990-93 (Belgrade, 2, 5/11/2007).

²⁰ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.306. Tanasije Mladenović, *Usputne skice za portrete* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1995), p.148.

Rašković sometimes even used aggressive, war-mongering rhetoric.²¹ This makes analysing his programme particularly challenging.

Rašković often presented his ideas in a confusing or ambiguous way, emphasising or omitting different parts of his programme for rhetorical purposes, depending on the audience and the political situation of the moment. He also saw parts of his programme as being integrally related and thus sometimes did not mention every element, contributing to the apparent ambiguity in his stance. This chapter argues, however, that, if we make our way through these 'verbal acrobatics',²² we can see that Rašković did have a coherent programme, that its evolution is traceable, and that it was, in fact, quite different from that usually attributed to him.

Rašković's Initial Programme: Sovereignty, Cultural Autonomy and the Association

Rašković's initial core demands were threefold: recognition of the 'sovereignty' of the Serbian nation in Croatia; full cultural rights including cultural autonomy; and regional autonomy for Serb-majority regions via an Association of Municipalities.

Rašković demanded that the Croatian side recognise the fact that the Serbs in Croatia were a nation with equal rights to the Croats – that they recognise the 'sovereignty of the Serbian national being' and its 'right to organise itself how it thinks is best for it'.²³ This recognition would be constitutionally effected in a number of ways. Firstly, the 'Serbian nation would need to enter' into a new Croatian constitution, as the existing

²¹ Compare, for example: Slavoljub Djukić, *Lovljenje vetra: Politicka ispovest Dobrica Ćosića* (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2001), p.179; HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, 'Stenogram govora dr. Milana Babića, Dušana Zelembabe i Jovana Raškovića prilikom rasprave o amandmanima na Ustav Republike Hrvatske', 6/7/1990, p.38; Sonja Biserko, *Vukovarska Tragedija 1991: U mreži propagandnih laži i oružane moći JNA* (Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2007), pp.353-4.

²² Milan Jajčinović, 'Hrvatska s katedrale', *Danas*, 17/7/1990, pp.18-19.

²³ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2* - Document 13, p.38.

1974 constitution was a ‘farce’ which gave the Serbs rights only on paper.²⁴ As far as the constitutional definition of Croatia was concerned, Rašković declared himself against any form of ‘group sovereignty’, however, and argued that Croatia should be a state of its citizens. The sovereignty of nations would follow from that, and in this respect Croatia should be defined as ‘the state of the Croatian nation, the Serbian nation in Croatia, and other nations’.²⁵ This was consistently demanded by the SDS throughout 1990, regardless of what additional autonomy it sought.²⁶

Under its 1974 constitution, Croatia had been defined as ‘the national state of the Croatian nation, the state of the Serbian nation in Croatia, and the state of the nationalities which live within her’.²⁷ The only subtle - but significant – difference between Rašković’s proposal and the existing definition was that Croatia was no longer the ‘national state’ of the Croatian nation: it was only the state of each nation, equally. This reflected the SDS’s view of Croatia as a bi-national state.²⁸ Rašković fleshed the idea out further in his December 1990 proposals for the Croatian constitution, suggesting that after the preamble about the historic right of Croats to their state, a section be added talking about the Serbs’ historic rights, including ‘all rights of a political nation, which belong to them in their entirety’.²⁹ As Letica notes, this implied the right to self-determination, too.³⁰ Rašković also proposed a dual-chamber Sabor (Assembly), the second chamber being a ‘Council of Nations’ where Serbs would have veto power over all decisions affecting them.³¹

²⁴ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.251.

²⁵ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.272. Also: Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp. 321-2. Marinko Čulić, ‘Čega se boje Srbi’, *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15.

²⁶ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 29, ‘Mišljenje Pravne komisije Srpskog nacionalnog vijeća u svezi nacarta Ustava Republike Hrvatske’, p.73. Interview Vojislav Vukčević, Vice-President of SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 2007).

²⁷ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.88.

²⁸ Jasna Babić, ‘Pod zvijezdom razdora’, *Danas*, 19/6/1990, pp.17-19.

²⁹ Rašković, ‘Primjedbe...’, p.1.

³⁰ Interview Slaven Letica, principal advisor to President Tuđman, 1990-91 (Zagreb: 8/10/2009).

³¹ Rašković, ‘Primjedbe...’, p.3. This was indicated already in ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/02/1990), p.17, and proposed by Opačić in June: Marinko Čulić, ‘Olako uspunjene brzina’, *Danas*, 3/7/1990, pp.16-17.

Secondly, Rašković sought to establish the cultural unity of the Serbian nation through cultural autonomy. The Serbs must have their own cultural societies, museums, publishing houses, newspapers, radio and television in Croatia. They must have the full right to officially use the Serbian language and Cyrillic script (traditionally favoured by Serbs, though in declining use among Serbs in Croatia), and Serbian schools with different curricula.³² Rašković and others in the SDS were inconsistent, however, on whether they demanded these rights only for areas where Serbs were the majority population,³³ or for the whole of Croatia – their more usual position.³⁴

Thirdly, also essential was the formation of a Serbian region, or regions, in Croatia. Rašković argued that such a region – the ‘Krajina’ –³⁵ in fact existed and had its ‘natural, traditional and ethnic bonds’, and was ‘only broken up thanks to the leading Croat-centric politics’.³⁶ Under socialism, every municipality in Croatia belonged to an Association of Municipalities (*Zajednica općina*) with its neighbours, voluntary associations for cooperation on areas of mutual interest.³⁷ The Serb-majority municipalities were all included in Associations based on Croat-majority regional centres, and the SDS programme argued that this regional organisation, and the existing municipal boundaries, divided historic ‘Krajinās’ and did ‘not correspond with the historic interests of the Serbian people’. Citing the economic underdevelopment of the Serb-majority municipalities as an additional justification, the party promised to ‘strive for an administrative division of Croatia into regions and municipalities which would reflect more appropriately the ethnic structure of the area in which we live.’³⁸

³² For example: ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/02/1990), pp.14, 17-18. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.251.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.251.

³⁴ Rašković, ‘Primjedbe...’, p.3. Stefan Grubač, ‘Nećemo da budemo naivni’, *NIN*, 5/19/1990, pp.10-13.

³⁵ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.245.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.250.

³⁷ Drago Flego and Miroslav Kutanjac, *The Socialist Republic of Croatia* (Zagreb: Mladost, 1982), p.36. Interview Drago Dimitrović, Secretary of SKH, 1986-89 (Zagreb: 9/10/2009). Interview Ratko Ličina, Sabor deputy and President of Gračac SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 27/07/2007).

³⁸ ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/02/1990), p.16-17.

Thus, the creation of Serbian regions and municipalities in Croatia was advocated from the outset, Rašković speaking about this at the SDS's founding meeting, as well as in the following months.³⁹ The SDS's electoral strategy, in fact, was to concentrate on winning power in at least a few Serb-majority municipalities and then use them as a base for creating a Serbian region.⁴⁰ The idea was to form an 'integral region' of the Serb-majority municipalities in Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun and Banija,⁴¹ and the chief means of doing this, it was decided after the elections, was the formation of a new Association of Municipalities.⁴²

Initially this was titled the 'Association of Municipalities of North Dalmatia and Lika', to consist of the six Serb-majority municipalities of that region. However, this limitation was only tactical: the SDS's influence beyond that region was then limited, and it wanted to begin quickly implementing its programme without waiting for approval from other municipalities. It was always intended that the Association would unite all 'Serb' municipalities.⁴³ The SDS also began campaigning for the re-drawing of municipal borders, organising local referendums among villages bordering the Serb-majority municipalities on acceding to them.⁴⁴

This new, ethnically-based Association was also intended as something more than the existing Associations.⁴⁵ In addition to independently deciding about questions of economic development,⁴⁶ it was envisaged that the Association would have its own

³⁹ Domagoj Knežević, 'Srpska demokratska stranka od osnivanja do konstituiranja prvog višestranačkog Sabora', *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 43, 1 (2011), p.9.

⁴⁰ Interview Branko Marijanović, Vice-President of SDS 1990-91 (Belgrade: 7/11/2007). Radovan Kovačević, 'Srbi u Hrvatskoj: Idemo dalje', *Intervju*, 8/6/1990, pp.16-17.

⁴¹ Miroslav Ivić and Jadranka Klisović, 'We will not demand any sort of state', *Danas*, 25/3/1990, in FBIS-EER-90-074, 30/5/1990.

⁴² Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.174. Domagoj Knežević, p.19.

⁴³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.250, Photo Album, p.116. *Danas*, 25/3/1990, in FBIS-EER-90-074, 30/5/1990. Snežana Stamatović, 'Srbi po rodu – Hrvatska po domu', *Borba*, 18/6/1990, p.7. S. Stamatović, 'Inicijativa s punom podrškom', *Borba*, 28/6/1990, p.4. Ante Nazor, 'Govori srpskih čelnika na proslavi u Kosovu kod Knina (VII. dio)', *Hrvatski Vojnik*, No. 249-50, 7/2009, accessed 1/11/2011 from: <http://www.hrvatski-vojniki.hr/hrvatski-vojniki/2492502009/domovinskiirat.asp>.

⁴⁴ Interview Ratko Ličina, Sabor deputy and President of Gračac SDS (Belgrade: 27/07/2007).

⁴⁵ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.250.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.253. *Danas*, 25/3/1990, in FBIS-EER-90-074, 30/5/1990.

regional assembly and autonomously manage the Serbs' cultural autonomy, such as their schools.⁴⁷ There was also some ambiguity on what degree of municipal self-government the SDS expected – the SNV's Declaration also spoke of 'full municipal self-government', which was very substantial at the time.⁴⁸ Municipalities which served as centres of the Associations then had police Secretariats (*Sekretarijati unutrašnjih poslova*, SUPs), mid-level units which had authority over other police stations (*Stanice javne sigurnosti*, SJSs), and Knin had demanded a SUP in July, covering the other municipalities of the SDS's Association.⁴⁹ This was also demanded by Rašković in August, though not formally mentioned in subsequent proposals.⁵⁰

Rašković described this programme as 'sovereign autonomy on the regional principle', and maintained that a regional Association was a 'condition for modern autonomy' of which there were 'hundreds' of cases in Europe.⁵¹ For him, cultural autonomy and regional, territorial autonomy were inseparable concepts: 'There cannot be any cultural autonomy without territoriality'.⁵² Thus, his proposals for 'cultural autonomy' always contained a territorial element, and it was this three-pronged programme that he advocated to Tuđman when they met in July: Serbian sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and the Association.⁵³ He and others in the SDS often referred to this package, rather misleadingly, as 'cultural autonomy', claiming that that was 'all' they sought, one source of confusion about their actual proposals.⁵⁴

The formation of the Association also served additional purposes for Rašković. It would serve as a 'good base of resistance in the case of anti-Serbian behaviour of the Croatian

⁴⁷ ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/02/1990). Interview Ratko Ličina (Belgrade: 27/07/2007).

⁴⁸ ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990).

⁴⁹ S.S., 'Najava samostalne milicije', *Borba*, 3/8/1990, p.9.

⁵⁰ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.329-35.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.250, Photo Album, p.116 (*Politika*, 18/6/1990), p.253. And: 'Rašković Addresses Party Rally', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 23/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-124, 27/6/1990. 'Association of Serbs in Croatia Founded', *Tanjug*, 28/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-128, 3/7/1990. Snježana Stamatović, 'Srbi po rodu – Hrvatska po domu', *Borba*, 18/6/1990, p.7.

⁵² HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 18, p.55.

⁵³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.307-12.

⁵⁴ For example: Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.190. 'Rašković Discusses Program with Press', *Tanjug*, 5/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-173, 6/9/1990.

Sabor', a space in which they could 'organise a moral and political defence'⁵⁵ and 'fight off various pressures'.⁵⁶ Moreover, Rašković explained on 6 July, the Association was just the 'first phase'⁵⁷: 'We do not hide [the fact] that the new associations of municipalities are a base, for the establishment of the political and even territorial unity of the Serbian nation'.⁵⁸

Rašković's Alternative: Political-Territorial Autonomy and Secession

For Rašković, in fact, another option had always existed, beyond regional autonomy: political-territorial autonomy. The SDS's founding programme said, 'It is necessary to ensure constitutional possibilities to create territorial autonomies within individual federal units should the population in the territories with a special ethnic composition or a cultural and historical identity so decide in a referendum'. Something less than the status of Kosovo and Vojvodina under the 1974 constitution was intended, however, as the programme sharply criticised this 'grotesque' 'Soviet' model of autonomous provinces, blaming it for bloodshed in Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh.⁵⁹ Rašković took the same position publicly.⁶⁰

Indeed, in the first half of 1990 Rašković often argued that the Serbs were not seeking a second state in Croatia like Serbia's autonomous province of Kosovo, which had enjoyed a level of autonomy Serbian nationalists had long criticised as excessive, and which Serbia was then in the process of reducing, in the face of resistance from the province's Albanian majority. He claimed to be against any such idea, which he argued would lead to similar bloodshed.⁶¹ This was one of his most common arguments: they

⁵⁵ Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20. And: Domagoj Knežević, pp.17-18.

⁵⁶ *Tanjug*, 28/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-128, 3/7/1990.

⁵⁷ Radovan Kovačević, 'Srbi u Hrvatskoj: Idemo dalje', *Intervju*, 8/6/1990, pp.16-17.

⁵⁸ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, pp.37-8.

⁵⁹ ICTY-Martić: E-137E (SDS Programme, 17/02/1990), pp.12, 15.

⁶⁰ V. Đorđević, 'The Victim is Defended with Democracy', *Borba*, 10/3/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-057, 23/3/1990.

⁶¹ For example: Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.275-6.

were not seeking what the Kosovo Albanians had, only rights such as were found in 'hundreds' of places in Europe.⁶² However, he and others in the SDS also applied this argument to their suggested 'territorial-political autonomy', which would be a 'modern' autonomy 'such as today there is everywhere in the world'.⁶³

Rašković was ambiguous on whether or in what situation Serbs might claim political-territorial rather than regional-cultural autonomy. He initially did not openly advocate the former, but rather mentioned it as a possibility, arguing that that this would depend on the behaviour of the Croatian side, and was thus an open question - despite still often claiming to be against wider autonomy.⁶⁴ He argued that Serbian autonomy would be a 'dynamic creation' which 'will fluctuate in so much as Croatian politics will fluctuate'.⁶⁵ if Croatian politics would 'recognise the Serbian nation and its right to organise itself how it thinks is best for it, then that autonomy does not need to be wide, nor aggressive', but if it would not, or if the HDZ was taken over by its 'Ustaša core',⁶⁶ the new Sabor was 'Croatocentric',⁶⁷ or 'refused to accept the Serbs as a national entity',⁶⁸ then the Serbs' only option would be to create a radical, 'firm autonomy'.⁶⁹ Thus, he said, 'the Croatian Sabor, HDZ and Dr Franjo Tuđman have an open card on the table' and the Serbs would respond, as in a 'game of chess. Move – to move.'⁷⁰ In fact, Rašković handed himself and the SDS an open card to radicalise its programme if its demands were not immediately met.

⁶² Milan Četnik, 'Sluga Duhog Naroda', in Dobrica Ćosić et al, *Zbornik o Jovanu Raškoviću* (Novi Sad & Belgrade, 2002), p.236. 'Rašković Discusses Program with Press', *Tanjug*, 5/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-173, 6/9/1990. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.226, 254-5, 268. Babić used the same rhetoric: I. Radovanović, "'Dva rata" u mesec dana', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2.

⁶³ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, p.37-8. J. Babić, 'Knin u klin', *Danas*, 2/8/1990, p.13-15. Milan Jajčinović, 'Krajina mimo ustava', *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15. Interview Branko Marijanović, Vice-President of SDS 1990-91 (Belgrade: 7/11/2007).

⁶⁴ For example: Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.177.

⁶⁵ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, p.38.

⁶⁶ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.231.

⁶⁷ Četnik, p.236.

⁶⁸ 'Serbia's Rašković on Links With Croatian TV', *Tanjug*, 18/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-139, 19/7/1990.

⁶⁹ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, p.38. Also: *Intervju*, 8/6/1990, pp.16-17. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.177, 231, 252.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.251.

Rašković argued that the Serbian nation in Croatia had the right to determine itself what form of autonomy it would opt for – the SDS would not set a strict programme, but would follow the wishes of the people.⁷¹ The main concept that the SDS promoted, however, was to link the Serbs' relationship with Croatia with Croatia's relationship with Yugoslavia.

Taken in isolation, some of Rašković's moderate statements in May-June 1990, seemed to suggest that he accepted the 'plebiscitary decision of the Croatian nation' in favour of 'an independent Croatian state with a weak or almost no Yugoslavia', speaking only of his 'cultural autonomy' programme despite this.⁷² In other statements in the same period, however, he was clear: 'regardless of [the HDZ victory], our orientation is still Yugoslavia'.⁷³ For Rašković, recognising the 'right' of the 'Croatian nation... to organise the country however it finds appropriate', and its 'right to separate from Yugoslavia' did not imply any renunciation of his program, because he simultaneously sought that the Croats recognise 'the sovereignty of the Serbian national being in Croatia' and the Serbs' 'plebiscitary right to determine where and with whom they will live'.⁷⁴ And, as he said on 19 May, if the Croats 'go for loosening or abolishing relations with Yugoslavia', then the Serbs would have the right to do the same towards Croatia.⁷⁵

The SNV's Declaration of 25 July 1990 – which Rašković said he accepted 'in its entirety'⁷⁶ - was clear on the question of degrees of autonomy: cultural-regional autonomy applied only in a federation, and in a confederation 'full political-territorial autonomy' would be sought.⁷⁷ Just three months later, however this programme was formally abandoned in favour of a more radical alternative: territorial autonomy in the

⁷¹ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 18, p.55.

⁷² Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.189-90. Also Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20.

⁷³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.176.

⁷⁴ D. Banjac, 'Stranka koja ukida strah', *Borba*, 16/7/1990, p.3.

⁷⁵ Domagoj Knežević, p.20. Also: *Intervju*, 8/6/1990, pp.16-17. Marinko Čulić, 'Pohod udruženih voždova', *Danas*, 10/7/1990, pp.13-15. Biserko, p.362. M. B. & R. S., 'Da ne pukne misić', *Borba*, 24/7/1990, p.5.

⁷⁶ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 15, SNV founding meeting, 25/7/1990, p.40.

⁷⁷ ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990).

case of a Yugoslav federation, and, in the event of a confederation or independence - which were now equated - the 'inalienable right to choose whether to remain and live in a single state with the majority of the Serbian people'.⁷⁸

Radicalisation

The SDS Executive Board adopted its more radical programme on 20 October 1990, when Rašković was on a fund-raising tour in North America. Some authors have suggested that Babić radicalised the party in Rašković's absence.⁷⁹ Rašković's own rhetoric, including *before* his trip to America, suggests a rather different interpretation, however.

The SDS's position on what would happen in the case of full Croatian independence was never explicitly defined – the SNV's Declaration, for example, did not address this, though emphasising that Serbs had the right to self-determination.⁸⁰ On the one hand, Rašković stated in mid-July that as well as applying in the event of a confederation, territorial autonomy would 'clearly... also be [proclaimed] in the case that there is neither a confederative Yugoslavia', i.e. Croatian independence – though insisting, at the same time, that the Serbs had the right to self-determination.⁸¹ In other statements, including earlier in July, however, Rašković was very clear that in the event of Croatian independence the Serbs would themselves have the right to secede from Croatia and remain in Yugoslavia (via a referendum on their fate), outlining this in some detail.⁸² In fact, after this ambiguous July statement Rašković seems to have been consistent in his

⁷⁸ 'Serb Autonomy Party in Croatia Issues Platform', *Tanjug*, 21/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-206, 24/10/1990.

⁷⁹ For example: Glenny, p.17. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.72.

⁸⁰ ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990).

⁸¹ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.251-2. Also: Biserko, p.362.

⁸² HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, pp.37-8. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.245-6, 264-5. 'Democratic Party Warning on Croatian Secession', *Tanjug*, 26/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-145, 27/7/1990. Chuck Sudetic, 'Serb Minority Seek Role in a Separate Croatia', *New York Times*, 7/8/1990. D. Banjac, 'Stranka koja ukida strah', *Borba*, 16/7/1990, p.3. M. B. & R. S., 'Da ne pukne misić', *Borba*, 24/7/1990. Dušan Glavaš, *Naša Krajina : ratni dnevnik 1990-1995. godine* (Belgrade: Knjiga komerc, 2005), p.19.

rejection of any solution in a fully independent Croatia, and it seems likely that in that earlier instance 'political and territorial autonomy' actually meant the creation of an independent entity with the right to self-determination.⁸³ On 5 September Rašković then announced a new idea on how the Serbs could implement their right to self-determination in this eventuality: the formation of a united and independent Krajina state, including both the Croatian and Bosnian Krajinas.⁸⁴ This was Rašković's main proposal in the following months.⁸⁵

Rašković's attitude towards a confederation had also always been ambiguous. He sometimes equated it with independence, arguing in June 1990, for example, that what the HDZ was demanding, including 'one's own money and one's own army', meant creating an 'independent state under the cover of a confederation.'⁸⁶ In early July he argued that a confederation is 'impossible and will not come to pass' – only secession was possible, in which case the Serbs would in turn secede from Croatia.⁸⁷ And as early as late July he argued that the SDS was for a federal Yugoslavia even if others seceded from it, and that they had no intention of allowing the confederalisation of Yugoslavia and the setting of 'borders through the living tissue of the Serbian nation'.⁸⁸ More often he espoused the Declaration's programme - political-territorial autonomy in a confederation.⁸⁹ But he dropped this stance in mid-September, arguing then onwards that if it 'comes to a confederation' then the Serbs would secede from Croatia and form

⁸³ Suggested by: V. Vignjević, 'Nećemo kriv', *Borba*, 6/9/1990, p.3. Z. Tarle, 'How Čubrilović Welcomed Franjo', *Borba*, 22/3/1990, p.13, in FBIS-EEU-90-063, 2/4/1990.

⁸⁴ 'Rašković Discusses Program with Press', *Tanjug*, 5/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-173, 6/9/1990. V. Vignjević, 'Nećemo kriv', *Borba*, 6/9/1990

⁸⁵ Jovan Rašković, 'Ja ne želim biti vaš vođa', Canada, 7/10/1990, accessed 1/11/2011: http://www.krajinaforce.com/dokumenti/Rašković_govor.html. 'Knin Serbs Express Desire for Sovereign State', *Borba*, 29/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-219, 13/11/1990. I. Tomljanović, 'Tezi i negodvanja', *Borba*, 1-2/12/1990, p.11. D. Drašković, 'Konfederacija put u katastrofu', *Borba*, 17/12/1990, p.3. 'Croatian Serbs Reject New Constitution', *Tanjug*, 23/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-247, 24/12/1990. *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15. Ratko Dmitrević, 'Povratak Krajine', *NIN*, 20/12/1990, pp.12-14.

⁸⁶ Snežana Stamatović, 'Srbi po rodu – Hrvatska po domu', *Borba*, 18/6/1990, p.7.

⁸⁷ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, pp.37-8.

⁸⁸ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.264-5. Also: Marinko Čulić, 'Pohod udruženih voždova', *Danas*, 10/7/1990, pp.13-15.

⁸⁹ Chuck Sudetic, 'Serb Minority Seek Role in a Separate Croatia', *New York Times*, 7/8/1990. 'Rašković Discusses Program with Press', *Tanjug*, 5/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-173, 6/9/1990. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.278-9.

a ‘new independent state of Krajina’, including the Bosnian Krajina.⁹⁰ Subsequent to this, Rašković rarely mentioned as an option any form of autonomy in a Yugoslav confederation.⁹¹

Rašković had often claimed to be against the creation of a Serbian state in Croatia, or even wider autonomy – but he always added caveats.⁹² Moreover, it seems that his stance against forming a Serbian state – to the extent that it was not simply a rhetorical device – related only to the degree of autonomy demanded, defended as modern autonomy ‘such as today there is everywhere in the world’,⁹³ and thus only concerned outcomes in which the Serbs would settle for autonomy. He told *Danas* in December 1990, for example, that he was ‘against the formation of a Serbian state in Croatia’, arguing that the ‘political autonomy’ he advocated was similar to that of regions in Italy, but simultaneously advocated the formation of a united Krajina state in the event of a confederation.⁹⁴

Moreover, political-territorial autonomy had, in fact, already been proposed on 24 September, when the SNV issued its first detailed set of proposals, authored by SDS vice-president Vojislav Vukčević, an SDS moderate and Rašković ally from Slavonia.⁹⁵ This document argued that the Serbian nation’s plebiscite on autonomy had been for ‘its sovereignty and its autonomy, which is to say for territorial autonomy where it represents the majority nation, and for cultural autonomy where it does not’. It proposed that the Croatian constitution mandate the existence of ‘Autonomous provinces as forms of territorial autonomy or as forms of cultural autonomy’, which would be constituted

⁹⁰ Ivan Bilić, ‘Kronologija raspada SFRJ i stvaranje Republike Hrvatske do 15. siječnja 1992’. *National Security and the Future*. Vol. 6, No. 1-2 (01.03.2005), p.96. Drago Marić, ‘Bosnia and Hercegovina: Border Gamble’, *Politika: The International Weekly*, 22/9/1990, p.4.

⁹¹ ‘Serbian Assembly To Form in Croatia’, *Tanjug*, 26/1/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-018, 28/1/1991. ‘Croatian Serbs Reject New Constitution’, *Tanjug*, 23/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-247, 24/12/1990. D. Drašković, ‘Konfederacija put u katastrofu’, *Borba*, 17/12/1990, p.3. I. Tomljanović, ‘Tezi i negodovanja’, *Borba*, 1-2/12/1990, p.11. A possible exception being: Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.309-10.

⁹² *Intervju*, 8/6/1990, pp.16-17.

⁹³ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, pp.37-8. J. Babić, ‘Knin u klin’, *Danas*, 2/8/1990, pp.13-15. *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

⁹⁴ *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

⁹⁵ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 29, pp.73-5.

on the basis of local plebiscites. These provinces would have their own budgets and elected regional assemblies, Executive Councils (governments) and administrations, and their competences would include local development, culture, education, official languages and scripts, public information, health and social protection and urbanism. This was less than the autonomy acquired by Kosovo and Vojvodina in 1974, and similar to their status under Serbia's 1990 constitution: there was no police or judicial autonomy, the provinces would have statutes rather than constitutions (although they would adopt these themselves) and their acts would be 'in accordance with the Constitution and law', although how this would be established or ensured was not mentioned. This was the political-territorial autonomy within Croatia of which Rašković spoke.

This proposal, moreover, was already premised on Croatia remaining in federal Yugoslavia, speaking of the will of the Serbian nation to 'with other nations and parts of the Serbian nation live in Yugoslavia', and proposing that the Constitution affirm that 'The Republic of Croatia is in the composition of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia'. It did not specify if it would also apply in a confederation. In place of an existing article, which stated that the 'Croatian Sabor and nation directly, in accordance with the Constitution and Law, independently decide' about relations with Yugoslavia, it also suggested that 'the Croatian Sabor and all nations and national minorities, who live in the Republic of Croatia' take such decisions, suggesting the Serbs' right to decide separately, i.e. to self-determination.

In early November the SNV issued the same proposal – which was without doubt, after the SDS's radicalisation two weeks earlier, contingent on the maintenance of federal Yugoslavia.⁹⁶ And in December Rašković, drawing up proposals with Vukčević, again

⁹⁶ 'Serbs Propose Autonomous Province in Croatia', *Tanjug*, 5/11/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-124, 5/11/1990.

proposed the same autonomous provinces in a federal state.⁹⁷ Rašković intended that two such provinces would be formed, Krajina and Slavonia.⁹⁸

Thus, Rašković's position in late 1990 was that if federal Yugoslavia was preserved, the Serbs would seek territorial autonomies, a bi-national Croatian state with recognised Serbian sovereignty and a dual-chamber Sabor, and the right to official use of Serbian and Cyrillic across the state.⁹⁹ In the event of a confederation or independence, the Serbs would secede from Croatia.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Rašković, 'Primjedbe...'. Interview Vojislav Vukčević, SDS Vice-President, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 1/8/2007).

⁹⁸ *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

⁹⁹ Rašković, 'Primjedbe...'. .

¹⁰⁰ *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

2.2. Rašković's Colleagues

The SDS was a broad movement. While Rašković was its most prominent speaker and ideologue, others in the party had different approaches. Examining their proposals allows us to better understand the SDS, and provides essential context for examining Rašković's ideas. The national programmes of Knin leaders Jovan Opačić, Dušan Zelenbaba and Milan Babić, and the leaders of the SDS in Slavonia, will now be considered.

Opačić and Zelenbaba: The Greater Serbian Alternative

Jovan Opačić and Dušan Zelenbaba,¹⁰¹ both SDS Sabor deputies from Knin, represented the more radical wing of the SDS, which they temporarily left in September 1990.¹⁰² If federal Yugoslavia was not preserved, then their proclaimed goal was not Serbian autonomy, but the formation of a wider Serbian state on the ruins of Yugoslavia.

Opačić had founded the Serbian cultural society 'Zora' (Dawn) in 1989, and, until summer 1990, was informally the number two SDS leader. Like Rašković, his rhetoric was often ambiguous, but it was certainly more radical.¹⁰³ He insisted from an early stage that republican borders were only administrative, and would have to be redrawn in the event of a confederation or Croatian independence.¹⁰⁴ Initially, therefore, he advocated the maintenance of Yugoslavia to avoid such a 'bloody drama of confrontation'.¹⁰⁵ He also increasingly spoke of the alternative, however, which he

¹⁰¹ Often spelled Zelembaba. He currently uses Zelenbaba, so I assume that this is correct.

¹⁰² Petar Samardžika, 'Split in the Serbian Democratic Party: Leadership Dispute', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 29/9/1990, p.7.

¹⁰³ For example: S. Stamatović, 'Bolje rat, nego podaništvo', *Borba*, 9/7/1990, p.4.

¹⁰⁴ NIOD, *Srebrenica: a 'safe' area* (Netherlands, Hague: NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2002) Volume I: Prologue, The history preceding the conflict: Yugoslavia up till 1991, p.76, accessed 1/11/2011 from: <http://www.srebrenica.nl/Pages/OOR/23/379.bGFuZz1OTA.html>.

¹⁰⁵ *Vjesnik*, 26/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-149, 2/8/1990. Nikola Solić, 'No Democracy Without Plurality of Parties', *Vjesnik*, 10/12/1989, p.8, in FBIS-EER-90-022, 20/2/1990. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.18-23.

began to frame in positive terms: the creation of a Serbian national state, ‘from Lika and Kordun to Pirota [in eastern Serbia], that is to say from Subotica [in northern Serbia] to Dubrovnik [an overwhelmingly Croatian town in south-east Croatia]’, as he said as early as June 1990.¹⁰⁶

Opačić also advocated a much more radical approach than Rašković. Already in March 1990 he warned that if pro-confederation parties won the Croatian elections, the SDS would proclaim the ‘political autonomy’ of the Krajina, which would include Bosnian Krajina, and therefore presumably involve a substantial degree of autonomy.¹⁰⁷ And in July he declared that if Croatia’s constitutional amendments were not withdrawn, ‘The Serbian people will be forced to create political autonomy, which will be the first step towards creating a unified Serbian state in the Balkans.’¹⁰⁸ He left the SDS for the SPO in September and, although still speaking of defending Yugoslavia, thereafter fairly openly advocated the formation of a greater Serbian state.¹⁰⁹

Dušan Zelenbaba, meanwhile, was a close ally and supporter of Opačić, who had brought him into the party.¹¹⁰ His rhetoric was more extreme than Opačić’s, but his stance, on forming a greater Serbian state on the ruins of a disintegrating Yugoslavia, was the same, with autonomy only a transitional step on the way.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Marinko Čulić, ‘Pohod udruženih vozdova’, *Danas*, 10/7/1990, pp.13-15. Also: ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.12.1 (Founding of SNV, Banja Luka, 13/10/1990).

¹⁰⁷ Z. Tarle, ‘How Čubrilović Welcomed Franjo’, *Borba*, 22/3/1990, p.13, in FBIS-EEU-90-063, 2/4/1990.

¹⁰⁸ *Vjesnik*, 26/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-149, 2/8/1990. Mladen Pleše, ‘The Passions of Conflict’, *Vjesnik*, 13/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-140, 20/7/1990. Also: BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.7.

¹⁰⁹ For example: ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.12.1 (Founding of SNV, Banja Luka, 13/10/1990). Ratko Dmitrović, ‘Kumovi napustili čaču’, *NIN*, 28/9/1990, p.16.

¹¹⁰ Srđan Španović, ‘Emperor Dušan and His Parish’, *Start (Zagreb)*, 19/1/1991, in FBIS-EER-91-027, 4/3/1991.

¹¹¹ Dragan Barjaktarević, ‘Dr Dušan Zelenbaba, poslanik u Sabor Hrvatske: Rat je već objavljen’, *Intervju*, 12/10/1990, pp.9-11. *Danas*, 10/7/1990, pp.13-15. Milan Jajčinović, ‘Barikade u glavama’, *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.26-27. Armina Galijas, *Eine Stadt Im Krieg Der Wandel Der Bosinschen Stadt Banja Luka (1990-1995)* (Doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 2009), p.115. Anđelko Milardović, *Srbijanski masovni pokret i hrvatsko pitanje* (Zagreb: Globus, 1991), pp.167-8. Milan Jajčinović, ‘Creation of a West Serbia’, *Danas*, 30/10/1990, pp.26-27 in FBIS-EEU-90-165, 17/12/1990.

Milan Babić and SAO Krajina

Milan Babić, president of Knin, the Association (later SAOK) and the SNV, became the number two in the party by the autumn, displacing Opačić, and would proceed to sideline Rašković from late 1990 onwards. He subsequently led Krajina's secession from Croatia and the creation of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK).

Initially, however, Babić had adopted a centrist stance within the SDS. His public proposals were in line with the established programme, including the Association as the basis of autonomy until October 1990. His proposals were not particularly more radical than Rašković's – in fact, he stated much more explicitly than Rašković that territorial autonomy would apply in the case of independence, including as late as 3 September.¹¹² In 1990 there were only two notable differences in their proposals.

Firstly, Babić spoke of the Association as eventually also including municipalities in Slavonia, which Rašković only mentioned later, in the context of territorial autonomy.¹¹³ Secondly, although Babić and his allies referred, like Rašković, to the 'experience of regional autonomies which exist today in Europe' as an 'example' for their territorial autonomy, a significantly greater degree of autonomy was actually demanded.¹¹⁴ Unlike the SNV's earlier proposals and Rašković's own proposals that same month, SAOK's December 1990 statute also included police and judicial autonomy and its own system of taxation, and said that the province's acts could also be called 'laws'. It also insisted that 'There shall be no question of institutionalised state control' over the province, with the exception of ensuring 'the constitutionality and legality of the Autonomous District's enactments', a function to be performed by the Constitutional Court alone, with no explanation of how compliance might be ensured.¹¹⁵ This was, as the Croatian

¹¹² 'Croat Serbs Vote 'Overwhelmingly' for Autonomy', *Tanjug*, 3/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-171, 4/9/1990. Biserko, p.31. Also: Stefan Grubač, 'Nećemo da budemo naivni', *NIN*, 5/10/1990, pp.10-13.

¹¹³ Nazor, 'Govori srpskih čelnika...'. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, p.35. Milojica Šutović, 'Samoopredeljenje naroda i raspad Jugoslavije', *Kultura Polisa*, god. VIII (2011), br.15, p.70, n.53. S. Stamatović, 'Inicijativa s punom podrškom', *Borba*, 28/6/1990, p.4.

¹¹⁴ ICTY-Milošević: E-P351.6 (Draft Statute of SAOK), p.2.

¹¹⁵ ICTY-Milošević: E-P351.14a (Statute of SAOK, 12/1990).

government noted, a ‘state within a state’, much the same as Kosovo and Vojvodina under the 1974 constitution.¹¹⁶

In December, Babić sent his draft proposal for the formation of SAOK to Croatia’s Constitutional Commission. The idea was resoundingly rejected, the Sabor instead adopting the new constitution demoting the Serbs' status. Babić then declared SAOK's formation, and also made it clear that territorial autonomy only applied in the case of a federation, and if Croatia separated from Yugoslavia, Krajina would separate from Croatia and ‘remain in Yugoslavia or in a state to be formed by the... Serb people’.¹¹⁷ In 1991 SAOK then progressively seceded from Croatia, usually in line with Croatian steps towards secession from Yugoslavia: 'disassociating' from Croatia in February 1991, seceding in March 1991, and, on 1 April 1991, declaring annexation to Serbia.

In his testimonies in The Hague Babić claimed to have supported autonomy in Croatia in 1990.¹¹⁸ But the available evidence suggests that he probably had a more radical agenda from the start. Veljko Popović, head of Knin government in 1990-91, recalls that even before the elections Babić told him that the Krajina should be an autonomous province like Kosovo and Vojvodina, and that Babić had always believed this, feeling that it should have happened in 1945.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Babić had been studying Yugoslav censuses for years, and had a ‘very systematic’ knowledge of them, down to which nation was the majority in each village.¹²⁰ Babić’s public wish of luck to the ‘autonomy of Krajina’ when the Association was first formed, and his references to it including even parts of Slavonia, also suggest that this limited creation was only a transitional step for him.¹²¹ Already in July 1990 he was publicly outlining in detail, down to each village, the ‘ethnic territory of Serbs in Croatia’ - which included some predominantly Croatian areas -¹²² and the Serbian artist Milić of Mačve, meeting Babić that month,

¹¹⁶ *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

¹¹⁷ Stefan Grubač, 'Pitanje koje postavlje zastava u Kninu', *NIN*, 18/1/1991, p.16..

¹¹⁸ ICTY-Milošević and ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić.

¹¹⁹ Interview Veljko Popović, President of Knin government, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 8/11/2007).

¹²⁰ Interview Ratko Ličina, Sabor deputy and President of Gračac SDS (Belgrade: 2/11/2007).

¹²¹ Nazor, ‘Govori srpskih čelnika...’.

¹²² Biserko, p.31. Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 1/8/2007).

later recalled Babić referring to the future ‘definitive separation of Krajina from Croatia’, after which they would ‘seek the annexation of Krajina to Serbia’.¹²³

Babić’s attitude towards armed rebellion and negotiations, explored in the following chapter, also suggests that he was never seriously interested in a compromise solution. Babić’s increasing hostility to negotiations in 1990 was partly motivated by his desire to assert himself as the sole leader and representative of Serbs in Croatia, but also reflected the fact that, for Babić, war was an acceptable option, and, by mid-1991 at least, his chosen option.¹²⁴ As *Borba* noted in February 1991, ‘Babić and his followers believe that it is sufficient to distribute arms to the people or to secede and end the whole story’.¹²⁵

The fate of Serbs in overwhelmingly Croatian areas - the large Croatian cities and elsewhere - did not particularly concern Babić. He said that they would have to negotiate with Zagreb over their rights, but usually denounced such talks as treason.¹²⁶ Although rarely stated publicly, it seems to have been thought that at least some of the Serbs in rump Croatia might swap places with the Croats in Krajina.¹²⁷ Zagreb Serbian leader Milorad Pupovac recalls that one Krajina leader told him that Serbs remaining in Croatia would simply be killed, expelled and assimilated, and notes that ‘One part of the Serbian politicians was prepared for that to happen’.¹²⁸ Babić himself stated in December 1991, when most Croats had been forced out of the Krajina, that ‘All those

¹²³ Milić of Mačve, ‘“Mirni marš” na Zagreb’, in Ćosić et al, p.174.

¹²⁴ See for example: Jovan Opačić, ‘Etika i politika (poslanica)’, in Ćosić et al, pp.166-67. Milorad Bošnjak, ‘The First Border-Area Inhabitant Before the United Nations’, *Novi Rijec (Belgrade)*, 20/7/1991, in FBIS-EER-91-125, 20/8/1991. Branka Magas & Ivo Zanić, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1991-95* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p.202.

¹²⁵ I. Radovanović and V. Ilić, ‘The Dilemmas of Natural Allies’, *Borba*, 8/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-034, 20/2/1991.

¹²⁶ Interview Vojislav Vukčević, SDS Vice-President, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 2007). Snežana Stamatović, ‘Only Babić Understands Negotiations’, *Borba*, 15/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-058, 26/3/1991. ICTY-Martić: E-1e (SDS Krajina Communique). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 98: SDS Krajina, Announcement, 24/8/1991, p.209. Ilija Petrović, *Srpsko Nacionalno Vijeće Slavonije, Baranje i Zapadnog Srema* (ICTY-Dokmanovic: E-196. Novi Sad: Cvetnik, 1994), p.92.

¹²⁷ See for example: Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.134. Domovina Intercept: B7077 (Karadžić-Cosić, 15/2/1992). Biserko, p.85.

¹²⁸ Milorad Pupovac, *Čuvari imena: Srbi u Hrvatskoj i raspad Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Prosvjeta, 1999), p.199. See: Milan Bečejić & Uroš Komlenović, ‘“Povijesni sporazum” bez Tudmana?’, *NIN*, 5/7/1991, pp.11-13.

who want to leave Serbian Krajina for Croatia should be allowed to do so, and vice versa', while at a meeting of the SFRY Presidency two months later top RSK representatives said that Serbs must 'move' from Zagreb and elsewhere in Croatia, criticising as 'assimilated' those who remained.¹²⁹ It was above all on this issue, as well as Babić's stance on negotiations and policy (from April 1991 on) of annexation to Serbia, that Babić and Rašković would come to differ.

The Slavonians

The SDS was established late in Slavonia - from May 1990 onwards - and was always more moderately inclined there. The most notable leaders of the party were Veljko Džakula and Ilija Šašić in West Slavonia, and Goran Hadžić and Vojislav Vukčević in East Slavonia. There were significant concentrations of Serbs in both West and East Slavonia, but no municipality had an absolute Serbian majority, and only one, Pakrac (in the west), a relative majority, so there was no easy base for an autonomous region. SDS leaders nevertheless identified large swathes of Slavonia as being 'Serbian'. Even the moderate leaders of the SDS in Western Slavonia, for example, eventually declared an expansive autonomous region which would have had at most a relative Serbian majority, and included three municipalities with relative or absolute Croat majorities.¹³⁰

In early 1991 the SDS accelerated its efforts to redraw municipal boundaries to create Serb-majority territories, and in February attempted to annex Pakrac to SAO Krajina, with its police joining the Knin SUP and throwing up barricades to prevent Croatian intervention. Džakula, president of the Pakrac SDS and the dominant leader of the party in West Slavonia, led these efforts. Initially, he seems to have been an advocate of Serbian self-determination, stating that 'If Croatia leaves Yugoslavia, and it is working

¹²⁹ 'Babić: Krajina Plans To Recognise Slovenia', *Tanjug*, 28/12/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-251, 31/12/1991. ICTY-Milošević: E-P596.7a (SFRY Presidency minutes, 2/3/1992).

¹³⁰ See Appendices, Figures 2-4. ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula, T-347-8. Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009). Census data available in: Keichi Kubo, 'The Radicalisation and Ethnicization of Elections'. M. Cherif Bassiouni, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts*, established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (27/5/1994).

on that daily' then 'Serbs will secede from Croatia', while at the time of the Pakrac rebellion he declined offered talks with Zagreb.¹³¹ The rebellion was thwarted by Croatian police intervention, however. The failure to establish an autonomous rebel territory like Knin seems to have been an impetus to moderation, and Džakula reportedly thereafter 'reversed his policy completely'.¹³²

The arrest of a large number of Serbs in Pakrac led to talks between a Slavonian SDS delegation and Zagreb (including Tuđman himself) that March. The Serbs, led by Slatina SDS leader Ilija Šašić, spoke about their dissatisfaction with the new constitutional definition of Croatia, as well as their ideas of re-regionalisation and territorial-political autonomies. *Danas* reported that at the time the Slavonian SDS had decided to solve the Serbian question within Croatia 'whether Croatia is in Yugoslavia or not'; Šašić had, however, maintained that 'Serbs want to continue to live in Yugoslavia as a united state'.¹³³ At a meeting with the American ambassador to Yugoslavia the following month, meanwhile, Džakula, Šašić and Hadžić emphasised that they had not seceded from Croatia and 'do not see secession as the only desirable or acceptable solution', and 'stated several times that they are prepared to continue to live in Croatia' – but, they emphasised, 'only a democratic Croatia within a Yugoslav federation'.¹³⁴ In May-June 1991 the Slavonians also held referendums on remaining in Yugoslavia.

The Slavonian SDS was very much on Rašković's wing of the party, and in Zagreb emphasised that 'all relations, especially conflicts, must be resolved in a peaceful and democratic way'.¹³⁵ They even urged Serbian deputies to end their boycott of the

¹³¹ Ivica Miškulin, 'Srpska pobuna u općini Pakrac 1990.-1991.: Uzroci, nositelji i tijek', *Scrinia Slavonica*, No.11 (2011), pp.365-6. Ilija Petrović, p.54. Stevan Zec, 'Srpski zbegovi jos postoje', *Politika*, 10/3/1991, in Ivica Miškulić & Mladen Barać (eds), *Srpska Pobuna u Zapadnoj Slavoniji, 1990.-1995.: Nositelji, Institucije, Posljedice* (Slavonski Broad-Zagreb: HMDCDR, 2012), p.266.

¹³² ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Goran Hadžić, T9401; Borivoje Savić, T674-6; Vojislav Vukčević, T11086.

¹³³ Zeljko Krusel, 'Srbi u Banskim Dvorima', *Danas*, 19/3/1991, pp.22-23. Ivica Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda – djelovanje Srpske Demokratske Stranke u Zapadnoj Slavoniji 1990.-1991.', in Miškulić & Barać, p.55, and pp.39, 43.

¹³⁴ ICTY-Hadžić: T9443-4

¹³⁵ Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda...', pp.53-6.

Sabor,¹³⁶ and Džakula, Šašić and Hadžić all subsequently maintained contact with the Croatian MUP, most notably Croatian negotiator Slavko Degoricija, then assistant minister, working to avoid conflicts in the region.¹³⁷ Whether they were prepared to accept a solution within Croatia as suggested by the *Danas* report is, however, ambiguous, and this certainly does not seem to have been the thrust of their activities. Their main divergence with Knin appeared to be over their support for negotiations and avoiding conflict, and the most notable moderate, Vukčević, later explained the essence of their conflict as stemming from Babić's refusal to understand that in nationally mixed Slavonia different methods were necessary to achieve the same goal.¹³⁸ A meeting of the SDS Regional Committee for Slavonia in February 1991 emphasised that nations, not republics, had the right to self-determination, and that 'the Serbian nation wishes to live in one state and will oppose anyone who might divide it', and *Borba* reported at the time that the two sides' goals were 'identical', except 'Rašković and Vojislav Vukčević... advocate a policy that is based on political means in the hands of intellectuals'.¹³⁹ A Regional Committee meeting held after the Zagreb talks expressed the same conclusions as in February.¹⁴⁰ Even Vukčević's proposals were expansive: constituent status, territorial autonomy for Krajina and the re-drawing of municipal borders for 'local self-administration' in Slavonia. He believed that Serbs had the right to self-determination, and his attitude to Krajina's separation is ambiguous, but he did ultimately oppose secession in East Slavonia on the grounds that the Serbs were not the majority there.¹⁴¹ From spring 1991 onwards some more radical elements in Eastern

¹³⁶ 'Serbian Deputy Dzodan Returns to Assembly', *Tanjug*, 21/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-058, 26/3/1991.

¹³⁷ Zoran Daskalović, 'Becarac s pucanjem', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.20-22. Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009). Ivan Lovrenovic and Predrag Lucić, *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne: Knjiga Prva* (Split: Kultura & Rasvjeta, 2005), p.36. ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Vojislav Vukčević, Borivoje Savić, Goran Hadžić.

¹³⁸ Marijana Milosavljević, 'Prof Vojislav Vukčević, Advokat: Šepanje do sledećeg rata', *NIN*, 20/3/1992, p.26.

¹³⁹ 'Serbian Party Wants New Croatian Leaders', *Tanjug*, 3/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-023, 4/2/1991. I. Radovanovic & V. Ilic, 'The Dilemmas of Natural Allies', *Borba*, 8/2/1991, p.4, in FBIS-EEU-91-034, 20/2/1991.

¹⁴⁰ Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda...', p.58.

¹⁴¹ Interview Vojislav Vukčević, SDS Vice-President, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 2007). V. Ilić, 'Nisam ja izdajica', *Borba*, 22/4/1991. V. Ilić, 'Svakom svoja doslednost', *Borba*, 3/5/1991, p.5. Marijana Milosavljević, 'Prof Vojislav Vukčević, Advokat: Šepanje do sledećeg rata', *NIN*, 20/3/1992, p.26.

Slavonia began making their presence felt, however, and Vukčević was physically threatened and pushed into resigning by April.¹⁴²

Vukovar SDS President Hadžić, meanwhile, was something of an opportunist, and seemingly keeping his options open in this period. He worked on preventing clashes in contact with the MUP, who even went so far as to consider him their 'agent'.¹⁴³ At the same time, however, he was involved in a radical, separatist Serbian National Council of Eastern Slavonia, founded in January 1991,¹⁴⁴ and told JNA security that the HDZ was 'in essence an Ustaša movement' which no Serb trusted, a new war 'was on the horizon' and the Serbs 'would not wait for it unarmed'.¹⁴⁵ Although moderate with regard to negotiations, his stance still seems to have been in favour of Serbian self-determination in the event of Croatian independence. As he testified in his own trial at the ICTY: 'It was our position, the position of the party that I belonged to – and this is something that Professor Rašković repeated – [that the Serbs would remain in Croatia to the same] extent that Croatia is in Yugoslavia... And for those reasons right up until the war I kept in contact with Croatia in order to prevent its secession and also to prevent possible war.'¹⁴⁶ Eventually, as conflicts spread in the region and, in June 1991, Croatia declared its full independence from Yugoslavia, the radicals became more influential and Hadžić gave full support to armed Serb secession.

Šašić, likewise, was reportedly involved in the formation of Serbian units and supported Serb secession in mid-1991.¹⁴⁷ Džakula, on the other hand, continued his contact with Zagreb and was one of the main figures involved in founding the compromise-seeking

¹⁴² V. Ilić, 'Nisam ja izdajica', *Borba*, 22/4/1991.

¹⁴³ Josip Boljkovac, *Istina mora izaci van* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2009), p.235. Marko Dejanović, 'Špijun koji nas je mrzio', accessed 1/11/2011 from:

<http://markodejanovic.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/Hadžić2.pdf>. Degoricija, pp.212, 301. Davor Runtić, 'Josip Boljkovac i Slavko Degoricija su kroz pregovore s ratnički raspoloženim Srbima kupovali vrijeme', 2011, accessed 1/11/2011 from: http://www.hrvatski-fokus.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2082:prije-dvadeset-godina-jna-je-naoruavala-svako-selo-u-kojem-je-bilo-srba-&catid=22:fejtoni&Itemid=46. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić.

¹⁴⁴ Ilija Petrović. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić.

¹⁴⁵ Ljuban Karan, *Bio sam oficir KOS* (Belgrade: Blic, 2006), p.80. Similarly: ICTY-Hadžić: T11119.

¹⁴⁶ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T10089. And: T9443.

¹⁴⁷ ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-060, T12004-5. ICTY-Šešelj: Witness Mladen Kulić, T4425-6. Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda...', pp.63, 66.

Serbian Democratic Forum (*Srpski demokratski forum*, SDF, discussed later) in June-July 1991.¹⁴⁸ In August 1991 he initiated the formation of an expansive SAO Western Slavonia, which reportedly declared its unification with SAOK and Serbia.¹⁴⁹ In talks with the SDF, however, the SAO leadership emphasised its desire for 'a peaceful and agreed solution of the Croat-Serb conflict' and readiness 'to take part in defining the sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia', including both 'its internal system and its relationship with other Yugoslav republics.'¹⁵⁰ The SDS leadership also opposed starting war there, which was initiated instead by rebel hardliners.¹⁵¹ These activities suggest that Džakula was open to a solution within Croatian borders, although as nothing came of it the region – or, rather, what was left of it (most of its declared territory having been occupied by Croatian forces already in late 1991) - ultimately joined the RSK.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Zoran Daskalović, 'Becarac s pucanjem', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.20-22. Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009). Lovrenović and Lučić, p.36.

¹⁴⁹ 'Autonomous Region of Western Slavonia Formed', *Belgrade RTV*, 13/8/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-157, 14/8/1991.

¹⁵⁰ 'West Slavonia Serbs Want Peaceful Solution', *Tanjug*, 15/8/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-159, 16/8/1991. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Veljko Džakula, T298-302.

¹⁵¹ Ljuba Stojić, 'Bio sam i junak i izdajnik', *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18. ICTY-Martić & ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Veljko Džakula. Slavko Degoricija, *Nije bilo uzalud* (Zagreb: ITG, 2008), p.160. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D399, P1058 (DB Serbia, reports on situation in Western Slavonia, 12/1991).

¹⁵² Suggested by: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1058 (DB Serbia, report on situation in Western Slavonia, 6/12/1991).

2.3. Rašković's Dilemmas: Between Secession and Compromise

Rašković the Separatist

In 1991 Rašković was increasingly sidelined by Babić, who controlled SAOK. But he was still an influential personality at least into the summer.¹⁵³ What course of action did he advocate, however, and what was his attitude to secession from Croatia?

In most of his speeches and writings from the time, Rašković supported the policy of seceding from Croatia. In a January 1991 internal SDS document, for example, he supported the creation of a 'residual Yugoslavia' without the Slovenes and Croats but with 'the historic and ethnic Serbian territories' in present Croatia, also noting the alternatives of 'an independent Serbia, a Serbian state of Krajina as part of or an autonomous province of Serbia or, finally an ethnic Serbia', i.e. a 'Greater Serbia'.¹⁵⁴ The main option which Rašković spoke of, from September 1990, was the creation of a Krajina state, including both the Croatian and Bosnian Krajinas. He usually insisted that this would not be an ethnic state or a second Serbia, but a citizen's state with rights for all.¹⁵⁵ Elsewhere, however, he spoke of it as being part of Serbia, and he most likely always intended that it would remain linked with other 'Serb lands'.¹⁵⁶

Although SAO Krajina claimed greater autonomy than Rašković had sought, he publicly supported, and took credit for, its formation, emphasising that 'Serbian territorial and political autonomy' was at the very core of the SDS programme.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ As detailed in Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁴ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, p.130. At a rally in March 1991, Rašković outlined the same options, given the 'unfortunate' break-up of Yugoslavia. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.461.1 ('The Serbs Can Only Survive Together', *Glas Srpski*, 4/3/1991). Similarly: Dragan Pavlović, 'U politiku iz ljubavi prema svome narodu', in Ćosić et al, p.201.

¹⁵⁵ Rašković, 'Ja ne želim biti vaš vođa'. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.158.

¹⁵⁶ Biserko, p.175.

¹⁵⁷ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.317. And: Dušan Momčilović, *Novi genocida nad Srbima u HDZ Hrvatskoj* (Belgrade: ABC Glas, 1993), p.24.

Rašković's allies in the Krajina participated in and supported Krajina's 'disassociation' from Croatia in February 1991, while Rašković, then in Belgrade, declared that he 'fully supported' it, maintaining that the Serbian nation in Croatia thereby 'finally acquired... a state.' The Bosnian Serbs, he added, must join the 'Krajina state', and the Slavonian Serbs, Serbia.¹⁵⁸ Rašković publicly opposed Babić's April 1991 decision on annexation to Serbia, however, arguing that Krajina should instead conduct a referendum on remaining in Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁹ This would have left more room for compromise, but the main reason Rašković gave for this stance was 'That would in reality be one and the same but would sound a little different and better', and would avoid international condemnation, a tactical argument also posited by Milošević and Bosnian SDS leader Radovan Karadžić.¹⁶⁰

Rašković, however, entirely rejected any idea of exchange of populations or abandonment of the Serbs outside territories such as Krajina.¹⁶¹ And as separation actually began to be implemented, becoming a hard reality rather than an abstract nationalist principle, he became increasingly concerned about the consequences. In particular, he worried about the deteriorating position of Serbs inhabiting areas that were indisputably Croatian – about half of all Serbs in Croatia. In June 1991 Rašković noted that this was 'one of the biggest reasons because of which Babić and I split'. He explained:

The Krajina is now fully strengthened internally, and that will bring about the break-up of the block of Serbian nation in Croatia. The Serbian national being outside Krajina will be much more endangered than if it shared its fate with [the Serbs of Krajina]. That does not mean that we need to renounce Krajina, but such a Krajina generates very negative connotations. To the Serbian nation

¹⁵⁸ Biserko, pp.174-5, 366-7. S. Stamatović & Z. Tarle, 'Biće tu još neprijatnosti', *Borba*, 2-3/3/1991, p.15.

¹⁵⁹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.156. Biserko, pp.353-4.

¹⁶⁰ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.155-6. Domovina Intercept: C5312 (Karadžić-Grahovac, 24/6/1991). ICTY-Martić: E-235e (Meeting of SDS Slavonia Regional Board, 8/5/1991). ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.212.1 (Minutes, SDS BH parliamentary group, 9/10/1991).

¹⁶¹ For example: Ljuba Stojić, 'Bio sam i junak i izdajnik', *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18.

*outside Krajina nothing is left other than to migrate, or to give up and fully assimilate.*¹⁶²

As Rašković recalled in December 1991, he had been confronted with a dilemma: ‘whether to decide for preservation of Serbian biological strength or territory? That was the question – whether to force Serbian territory in Croatia as the dissolution of the Serbian question or to force security of the Serbian nation in Croatia, with recognition of the Croatian state however it was in that moment.’ He concluded: ‘Most likely the truth was somewhere in between – it would be best to conduct politics of preservation of Serbian territory as Serbian, but in the same way also preservation of the living biological force in the great cities.’¹⁶³ What this translated into in actual policy terms, however, is ambiguous.

Despite his public support for disassociation, Rašković had elsewhere expressed a cautious and critical attitude to the rapid development of Krajina’s secession. In an interview in May 1991, for example, he argued that ‘we needed first of all to determine Krajina as autonomous province in Croatia, with legal, executive and cultural-educational governance. We needed to insist on that and it seems to me that we in one brief period brought a few significant and fundamental things about Krajina.’¹⁶⁴ Secession, he said, should be implemented only when the ‘danger for the Serbian nation greater manifests’ - and never annexation to Serbia.¹⁶⁵ He later explained that, despite his misgivings, he had ‘tolerated’ Krajina’s policies up to and including secession, as ‘to me it is yet more important and dearer even an undemocratic, even communist Krajina than Krajina in an Ustashoid state.’¹⁶⁶

Rašković did not suggest that the Serbs renounce Krajina, however - ‘I normally do not have anything against Krajina, but I am not satisfied with the way and rate of drawing

¹⁶² Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.207.

¹⁶³ Ljuba Stojić, ‘Bio sam i junak i izdajnik’, *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18.

¹⁶⁴ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.154.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.155. Serbian opposition leader Vuk Drašković espoused a similar stance: Krajina's secession was premature, as Croatia was still in Yugoslavia at that point. 'The Decision on Secession is Premature', *Politika*, 23/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-060, 28/3/1991.

¹⁶⁶ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.230.

moves¹⁶⁷ – and in his May 1991 interview he also advocated the secession of Slavonia and the formation of a united Krajina state.¹⁶⁸ He seemed to be arguing for a more rounded Serbian policy in Croatia that would also take into account the need to protect the Serbs remaining in Croatia, and thus proceed towards secession more cautiously. He was also critical of Babić's methods, arguing for democratic elections and the formation of proper institutions in the Krajina.¹⁶⁹

Rašković the Negotiator

From the start, Rašković favoured negotiations and finding a peaceful resolution of the Yugoslav crisis, rather than the use of force. Although, as ever, Rašković's rhetoric was contradictory, it seems clear that he did want to avoid war, eventually even telling the Knin crowds in April 1991 that he would not be a war leader, and if they wanted a war they must seek another leader.¹⁷⁰ He often spoke of the need for dialogue and a peaceful resolution, and acted on this rhetoric too.¹⁷¹

Rašković had some contact with Tuđman during the electoral campaign, and upon the HDZ's victory the two party leaders formally met.¹⁷² Rašković struck a very positive note afterwards, and agreed that an SDS member, Opačić, would be a Sabor vice-president.¹⁷³ That spring Rašković also tried to arrange a symbolic visit of Croatian political leaders to a place, such as Glina, where the Serbs had indisputably been victimised by the Ustaše, in order to reduce Serb-Croat tensions.¹⁷⁴ Rašković met Tuđman again in July and seems to have genuinely sought good relations - he initially

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.205.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.157-8. Similarly: Srđan Radulović, 'Naprsli štit srpstva', *NIN*, 3/5/1991.

¹⁶⁹ Snežana Stamatović, 'Strah i nepoverenje', *Borba*, 1/2/1991, p.3. S. Stamatović & Z. Tarle, 'Biće tu još neprijatnosti', *Borba*, 2-3/3/1991, p.15. Also: Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.335-40.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.224-5.

¹⁷¹ For example: Ibid., pp.311-12. *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15. Marinko Čulić, 'Čega se boje Srbi', *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15.

¹⁷² Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.210.

¹⁷³ 'SDP Leader on Free Market, Multiparty System', *Tanjug*, 19/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-199, 20/6/1990.

¹⁷⁴ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.210-11, 227.

opposed calling the Srb rally (where the SNV was founded) to avoid complicating their talks, and the two agreed to draw up proposals for Serb autonomy in Croatia.¹⁷⁵

By September, Rašković said that he no longer wished to meet Tuđman unless he came to Knin, noting that both their meetings ‘had gone wrong’, but he maintained contact with Tuđman’s chief advisor Slaven Letica, submitted proposals for Croatia’s constitution, and continued to support negotiations through his ally Vukčević.¹⁷⁶ He was involved in several initiatives for talks in April-May 1991,¹⁷⁷ and in the summer joined the Zagreb intellectual Milorad Pupovac in founding the compromise-seeking Serbian Democratic Forum (SDF). Until Rašković’s death a year later, the two maintained regular contact and Rašković helped Pupovac with contacts in Belgrade, promoting him as a new Serbian leader.¹⁷⁸

Rašković supported the Vance peace plan in late 1991, and took part in new peace initiatives immediately afterwards. First, his wing of the SDS announced that they would be re-entering Croatian politics, demanding that Croatia cease persecuting its leaders to enable their return.¹⁷⁹ This did not materialise then, but was apparently due to be implemented just before his death.¹⁸⁰ And finally, in March 1992, he was involved in an initiative of Pupovac for the founding of a Serbian National Assembly in Croatia, to include Krajina representatives as well as the wide variety of Serbs who had remained politically active in Croatia.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.7. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.315, 319, 322. *Vjesnik*, 26/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-149, 2/8/1990.

¹⁷⁶ Interviews: Slaven Letica, principal advisor to President Tuđman, 1990-91 (Zagreb: 8/10/2009); Vojislav Vukčević, SDS Vice-President, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 2007). Jovan Rašković, ‘Mišljenje’, 29/10/1990 (author’s copy). Rašković, ‘Primjedbe...’.

¹⁷⁷ ‘No Results From Croatian-Serbian Talks in Knin’, *Tanjug*, 15/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-073, 16/4/1991. Lovrenović and Lucić, p.36. Uroš Komlenović, ‘Sačuvati srpski obraz’, *NIN*, 31/5/1991, p.12. Miškulin, ‘Stranka ugroženog naroda...’, p.58.

¹⁷⁸ Interview Milorad Pupovac, President of SDF, 1991-95 (Zagreb: 1/10/2009). And: Veselin Golubović, ‘Ne rat – nego mir’ in Ćosić et al, p.127.

¹⁷⁹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.344-8.

¹⁸⁰ ICTY-Martić: Witness Branko Popović, General-Secretary of SDS, 1990-91, T-8024-5. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.355.

¹⁸¹ Branko Podgornik, ‘Croatian Serbs Mature’, *Vjesnik*, 29/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992.

Rašković the Compromiser

What did Rašković hope to achieve through negotiations? Was he, despite his rhetoric, prepared to compromise to avoid war, and to accept a solution within independent Croatia?

Rašković's desire to negotiate and to find a peaceful solution, even to cooperate with the other side, does not *necessarily* imply a willingness to abandon or even compromise his goals and accept a solution inside the Croatian state. The Serbs in Bosnia, and Croatia and Slovenia in Yugoslavia, all participated in common institutions and organs of authority until the moment they implemented secession, and took part in countless negotiations. The Croatian Serbs could have done the same. Indeed, while Opačić was talking about becoming a Sabor vice-president, he was maintaining his stance that a confederation would require the redrawing of republican borders.¹⁸² Just because Serbian self-determination could not, realistically, be achieved through negotiations does not mean that Rašković did not hope for that.¹⁸³ Tuđman's project was no less grand he really did hope, and expect, to achieve it peacefully.¹⁸⁴

Rašković's support for Pupovac and the SDF also does not in itself mean that he was prepared to compromise along the lines that Pupovac, in his 'personal opinion', suggested – territorial autonomy in an independent Croatia.¹⁸⁵ The 'Lipik Declaration' of 13 July 1991, adopted at the initiative meeting for the SDF, did not in itself involve a renunciation of SDS goals – it emphasised rights of the Serbian population in Croatia, including to possible territorial, cultural and political autonomy, but also the Serb people's interest in remaining in a common state together with the Serbs of Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia.¹⁸⁶ SDS leaders had a variety of motivations for participating in

¹⁸² 'SDP Leader on Free Market, Multiparty System', *Tanjug*, 19/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-199, 20/6/1990. Miroslav Ivić, 'Komunisti više nigdje nemaju šansi', *Borba*, 24/5/1990, p.5.

¹⁸³ See, for example: Milan Jajčinović, 'Krajina mimo ustava', *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

¹⁸⁴ See, for example: 'Dušan Bilandžić: Tuđman mi je rekao - 'Kad podijelimo Bosnu, ja i Sloba bit ćemo saveznici'', *Nacional*, 5/6/2012.

¹⁸⁵ Zoran Daskalović, 'Three Serbian Mistakes', *Danas*, 23/7/1991, in FBIS-EER-91-118, 7/8/1991.

¹⁸⁶ Filip Škiljan, 'The Organisation and Political Position of Serbs in Croatia', *Serbian Political Thought*,

Pupovac's initiatives;¹⁸⁷ undoubtedly, the desire to negotiate and avoid war was the key one – but this does not necessarily imply a willingness to abandon one's program. Some of Rašković's SDS allies were likewise open to negotiations, but definitely hardline.¹⁸⁸ Dušan Zelenbaba, for example, also participated in founding the SDF. He occasionally indicated more moderate stances,¹⁸⁹ but most often his critiques of the ruling Serbian policies actually came from a more extreme position,¹⁹⁰ his most common rhetoric being about the necessity of buying arms.¹⁹¹

The destiny of Serbs outside Krajina/Slavonia had become a major concern of Rašković, and in 1991 he had attempted several times to initiate the formation of a Serbian parliament in Croatia, which would represent all Serbs there and would 'defend the endangered being of the Serbian nation'.¹⁹² Even after the RSK was formed, Rašković continued to reject division among the Serbs of Croatia, who were 'all Serbs of one region, of one psychological make-up, and a single root'.¹⁹³ He had rejected Babić's formation of the SDS Krajina, for example, as meaning 'the splitting of the Serbian nation into two parts'¹⁹⁴ and, despite the war, continued to argue that the SDS must 'psychologically, politically and factually unite Serbs gathered in SAO Krajina and those who will remain outside Yugoslavia, in Croatia'.¹⁹⁵ As 'genocide'¹⁹⁶ began to be implemented over them, moreover, protecting the Serbs outside Krajina became

No. 2/2012, Vol. 6 (Belgrade: Institute For Political Studies), p.43.

¹⁸⁷ Pupovac, p.96. Lovrenović and Lucić, p.36.

¹⁸⁸ For example, Branjo Marijanović and Branko Popović, vice-president and general secretary of the SDS respectively. Interview Branko Marijanović 1990-91 (Belgrade: 7/11/2007). ICTY-Martić: Witness Branko Popović. Also: 'Talks Without Agreement', *Danas*, 16/10/1990, pp.22-24 in FBIS-EEU-90-151, 5/11/1990. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2470 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 30/8/1994).

¹⁸⁹ For example: Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.216. 'Bosnian, Croatian Serbs Opposed', *Tanjug*, 5/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-003, 6/1/1992.

¹⁹⁰ For example: 'SDS Leaders Air Opposing Views', *Tanjug*, 10/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-008, 13/1/1992. G. Katić, 'Press Conference by Serbian National Council of Bosnian Krajina: Serb Republic or Continuation of War', *Borba*, 26/8/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-181, 17/9/1992.

¹⁹¹ For example: ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.461.1 ('The Serbs Can Only Survive Together', *Glas Srpski*, 4/3/1991).

¹⁹² Biserko, pp.366-67.

¹⁹³ S.P. Stamatović, 'The Serbs Are Not a Bogyman', *Borba*, 31/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992.

¹⁹⁴ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.209.

¹⁹⁵ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.340.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.209. And: 'Genocid je počeo', *Borba*, 8/5/1991, p.8.

Rašković's overriding concern, and negotiations were essential to this: 'That segment of the Serbian people in Croatia who have no chance whatsoever to live in any other land except Croatia must turn only to Zagreb. Solving the problems of that segment of the Serbian people is unthinkable without permanent communication with the Croatian state and the Croatian political regime.' The Krajina Serbs, meanwhile, were essential to ensuring that those negotiations took place.¹⁹⁷

Rašković always argued that it was for this reason that he was supporting Pupovac's initiatives, and that this did not imply any renunciation of Krajina. In an interview in June 1991, for example, Rašković argued that Pupovac 'is not a great Serb' but was 'an intelligent Serb' who could 'make something in that Croatia', clearly referring to rump Croatia.¹⁹⁸ Even Radovan Karadžić agreed that Pupovac could be useful to that end.¹⁹⁹

Rašković interpreted the Vance peace plan of late 1991 as 'a political freeze on current relations on keeping existing territories'.²⁰⁰ With the SDS's return to Croatia (which, despite Rašković's usual ambiguity, seems to have pertained only to rump Croatia),²⁰¹ the Serbian Assembly project and other initiatives, Rašković's promotion of dialogue may have been intended just to help the Serbs outside the Krajina, with the issue of Krajina's status being set to one side.²⁰² Indeed, in an interview in April 1992 he said that he was 'thinking of one party in Krajina and one outside it, which would have different aims.'²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ S.P. Stamatović, 'The Serbs Are Not a Bogyman', *Borba*, 31/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992. Also: Ljuba Stojić, 'Bio sam i junak i izdajnik', *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18.

¹⁹⁸ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.211. Also: *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18. S.P. Stamatović, 'The Serbs Are Not a Bogyman', *Borba*, 31/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992.

¹⁹⁹ Domovina Intercept: B7077 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 15/2/1992).

²⁰⁰ B. Radivojsa, 'Dr. Jovan Rašković on Arrival of 'Blue Helmets': Preserving Serbian Essence and Territory', *Politika*, 7/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-015, 23/1/1992.

²⁰¹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.347, 355.

²⁰² *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18. S.P. Stamatović, 'The Serbs Are Not a Bogyman', *Borba*, 31/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992.

²⁰³ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.460.1 (Interview Jovan Rašković, *Društvo*, 22/4/1992).

Pupovac maintained that SDS leaders Rašković and Dušan Štarević, both involved in the SDF and the Serbian Assembly project, accepted the territorial integrity of Croatia.²⁰⁴ Some evidence does indicate that Štarević, president of the Serbian cultural society *Prosvjeta* (based in Zagreb) and vice-president of the SAOK government in 1991, was a moderate.²⁰⁵ But he was also close to Krajina police chief Martić – certainly no moderate (although, according to Pupovac, Štarević and others felt that Martić was ‘more reasonable’ than Babić)²⁰⁶ – and is cited in the minutes of a SAOK government session in October 1991 as arguing that the government must constitute organs connected with a state of war, as ‘we are in war with Ustaše’.²⁰⁷ When Štarević died in 1992, the pro-RSK *Magazine of Serbian Krajina* memorialised him as someone who simply saw that ‘the destiny of Serbian nation did not fall only on Krajina, but also on that part remaining in the new NDH’.²⁰⁸

Some other evidence does support Pupovac’s argument that Rašković was open to autonomy in Croatia, however. SDF founder Svetozar Livada recalls spending six hours with Rašković at the SDF’s foundation in summer 1991 persuading him to accept minority status in the Croatian state, and that Rašković was eventually convinced, speaking to the crowd along those lines.²⁰⁹ He also supported Džakula's efforts to negotiate and avoid war, efforts which do seem to have included openness to a status within Croatia.²¹⁰

But Rašković generally did not such a solution. In three documents from late 1991, for example – a letter to American supporters, an SDS policy document, and an interview – Rašković insisted that it would not occur to him to ‘renounce Serbian Krajina and other

²⁰⁴ Branko Podgornik, ‘Croatian Serbs Mature’, *Vjesnik*, 29/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992. Pupovac, pp.95-6.

²⁰⁵ For example: Gojko Marinković, ‘Između Rodoljublja i Domoljublja’, *Danas*, 13/3/1990, pp.43-5.

²⁰⁶ Interview Milorad Pupovac, President of SDF, 1991-95 (Zagreb: 1/10/2009).

²⁰⁷ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, p.233.

²⁰⁸ Jovan Radulović, ‘In Memoriam Dušan Štarević (1932-1992)’, in Jovan Radulović (ed), *Magazin Srpske Krajine* (Knin: Srpska Zora, 1993), pp. 389-90.

²⁰⁹ Svetozar Livada and Darko Hudelist, ‘Kordunski Rekvijem’, *Erasmus – Časopis za kulturu demokracije*, Broj: 13, 1995, p.18, from www.ceeol.com.

²¹⁰ Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009). *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18.

autonomous Serbian regions established with liberationary war’, and spoke only of Krajina potentially being independent, part of Serbia, or connected with the Bosnian Krajina.²¹¹ In autumn 1991, in conversation with the American ambassador to Yugoslavia, he rejected the idea that the Serbs accept very extensive autonomy in Croatia: ‘I said to him that that is [too] late since now a consciousness was created in the people that they have already acquired their Serbian territory, and that whoever would come now with that idea, and was a Serb, would have to be proclaimed a traitor. In some new situation that could perhaps make sense, but in these environments – no.’²¹² He also maintained that with the present Croatian regime - ‘the most monstrous regime in history of European civilisation’²¹³ in its attitude towards Serbs - there was little or no hope for establishing better relations, placing no faith in their proposals for autonomy in late 1991.²¹⁴

Rašković most often indicated that the compromise he hoped for was over Croatia’s relationship with Yugoslavia. In a December 1990 interview with *Danas*, for example, he claimed that he was close to accepting a hybrid model, a Yugoslav confederation that would have a common army and foreign policy, in which case the Serbs would then have political-territorial autonomies within Croatia and Yugoslavia.²¹⁵ He may have continued to hope for such a compromise.²¹⁶

We may conclude that by summer 1991 Rašković, the cautious separatist, was conflicted, and may, at least at times, have been open to autonomy in Croatia in order to avoid war and save the Serbs outside Krajina. If he had had full control over the situation, he might have settled for a compromise inside Croatia – though he may have needed persuading. But his influence had waned, and - considered by himself and others

²¹¹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.328, 340. *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18.

²¹² Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.234.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.228.

²¹⁴ *Borba*, 31/3/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-070, 10/4/1992. *Politika*, 7/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-015, 23/1/1992. *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.228.

²¹⁵ *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.273.

²¹⁶ Tom Džadžić, Svetlana Đurđević, and Zoran Mirković, ‘The Traps in the Vance Plan’, *NIN*, 27/3/92, pp.15-17, in FBIS-EEU-92-072, 14/4/1992. Similarly: Marcus Tanner, ‘Serbs launch new party pledged to oust Babić’, *The Independent (London)*, 5/2/1992. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.328.

more a 'people's tribune' than a politician²¹⁷ - he was generally not prepared to go against 'his' people in Krajina and openly advocate such a compromise. He had, after all, always believed in the right of the Serbs to determine their own fate, and understood their desire to be independent from 'Ustashoid' Croatia. His primary concern and the main thrust of his political activities thus became assisting the Serbs remaining in Croatia, the area neglected by the territory-based politics of Knin and Belgrade, with the status of Krajina, at least for now, being set to one side.

The Real Rašković

It is clear that, with his unquestioning support for Krajina's rapid secession in spring 1991, Rašković could conceal his misgivings and advocate a programme with which he did not actually agree. Is it then possible that, despite his rhetoric, Rašković was always open to a compromise such as autonomy within an independent Croatia, and this was his true political agenda, as many authors suggest? Did he ever believe in territorial autonomy or secession, or was this simply crowd-pleasing populism, adopted to reinforce his standing among radicals in the SDS, as suggested by, for example, Hislope?²¹⁸

The available evidence does not support this idea. Rather, it better supports a conclusion that it was Rašković's early, moderate rhetoric that was, in fact, transitional, at a time when more radical stances might have won less support.

Rašković had always been ambiguous on whether or when the Serbs might seek territorial rather than regional autonomy, or implement their right to secession. Even in June-July 1990, for example, he had spoken of the Association as being merely 'a step to [the goal]' of autonomy, which was in fact 'political-territorial autonomy' (something which, elsewhere, he denied), and of secession from Croatia in the case of a

²¹⁷ Golubović, p.128. Dragan Pavlović, p.198.

²¹⁸ Hislope, *Nationalism*, pp.173-4.

confederation.²¹⁹ It is possible that he did not have a clear plan from the start and felt that this would be determined by the Serbian people. The way that the SDS was redrawing municipal boundaries, and the rapidity with which it radicalised its programme, however, strongly suggests that, as Rašković argued in October, regional autonomy was never intended as ‘a final solution’, but only ‘a transitional form’, ‘proof that the Serbian nation exists in Croatia and that the Serbian nation has the right to [self-determination]’.²²⁰ Rašković repeated the same stance in December, explaining that he ‘mentioned cultural autonomy in the phase when he thought that the Croatian state [would] have understanding for the Serbian national being’, i.e. would recognise Serbian sovereignty and autonomy, and advocated territorial autonomy when it was clear that such recognition would not be forthcoming.²²¹

This was, after all, certainly the case for the other key leaders of the SDS, with even most of the Slavonians supporting self-determination. This was also the position of the various Serbian nationalist intellectuals in Belgrade with whom Rašković associated. Rašković was particularly close with influential Serbian writer Dobrica Ćosić, whom he regarded as his ‘spiritual father’, and who helped draft the SDS's programme.²²² In the later years of his life Ćosić would emphasise his earlier association with Rašković, and claim that they - unlike Milošević - had only ever advocated a solution for Serbs within Croatia, rather than the ‘political nonsense’ and ‘absurd idea’ of breaking-up Croatia.²²³ Ćosić was, certainly, an advocate of peaceful and democratic solutions, and his ideal option was the preservation of federal Yugoslavia. But all the available evidence – including Ćosić's own public statements and published diaries - indicates that, if federal

²¹⁹ ‘Rašković Addresses Party Rally’, *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 23/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-124, 27/6/1990. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 13, p.38. *Danas*, 25/3/1990, in FBIS-EER-90-074, 30/5/1990. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.311, 264-5.

²²⁰ Rašković, ‘Ja ne želim biti vaš vođa’. Also: Radovan Kovačević, ‘Srbi u Hrvatskoj: Idemo dalje’, *Intervju*, 8/6/1990, pp.16-17.

²²¹ I. Tomljanović, ‘Tezi i negodvanja’, *Borba*, 1-2/12/1990, p.11.

²²² Četnik, pp.228-9. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.171. Darko Hudelist, *Moj beogradski dnevnik: susreti i razgovori s Dobricom Ćosićem, 2006.-2011.* (Zagreb: Profil, 2012), p.451.

²²³ Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, pp.450, 138-9, 437, 446. Slobodan Gavrilović, ‘Publish when I die [Interviews with Dobrica Ćosić]’, published on *InSerbia*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://inserbia.info/today/2014/06/Ćosić-publish-when-i-die-i-created-Karadžić-but-not-Milošević/>. Kesar, ‘Jovan Rašković’, *Večernji Novosti*, 5/9/2007, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.krajinaforce.com. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.169.

Yugoslavia did not survive, he was a convinced advocate of self-determination and all Serbs remaining in one state (and it was only later, from early 1992, that he began to shift towards accepting a solution for Serbs within Croatia).²²⁴

It therefore seems that in 1990 Rašković's idea of a peaceful solution was for the Croats to concede that the Serbs were a sovereign nation with the right to determine their own future, 'to organise itself how it thinks is best for it',²²⁵ including to opt for some form of autonomy or secession, the latter being more likely if Croatia rejected federal Yugoslavia. Rašković's negotiations with the Croatian leadership actually indicate this. In May 1990 he began by requesting from Tuđman constitutional recognition of Serbian sovereignty in Croatia and the fact that Croatia was a state of both 'Croatian and Serbian territories'.²²⁶ He tried to make this demand more palatable by deliberately speaking of the sovereignty of the 'Serbian national being' rather than the 'Serbian nation', and claiming that this was neither state 'sovereignty' nor 'dual-sovereignty', but the essence seems to have been the same.²²⁷ In July he expanded on this, presenting his three-pronged programme to Tuđman, while also suggesting that in the case of Yugoslavia's disintegration the Serbian region's status could change, and the Serbs could 'unite in one [Krajina] and be independent, [but also] be part of the Croatian state'.²²⁸ Whether this represented Rašković's true intentions is questionable, however, as throughout the conversation Rašković was clearly attempting to establish good

²²⁴ See: Dobrica Ćosić, *Lična istorija jednog doba, Vol. 3: Vreme raspada 1981-1991*. (Belgrade: Sluzbeni Glasnik, 2009). Dobrica Ćosić, *Lična istorija jednog doba, Vol. 4: Vreme mržnje 1992-1993*. (Belgrade: Sluzbeni Glasnik, 2009). Dobrica Ćosić, 'Rimska beseda', *NIN*, 6/12/1990, pp.46-49. Domovina Intercepts: C2352 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 11/11/1991); B7077 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 15/2/1992). Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, pp.437, 444-6. Sonja Biserko & Seška Stanojlović, *Poslednja šansa Jugoslavije: Haška konferencija 1991* (Belgrade: Helsinki odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji/Zagorac, 2002), p.223. Vladislav Jovanović, *Rat koji se mogao izbeći: u vrtlogu jugoslovenske krize* (Belgrade: Kiz Altera, 2008), pp.56-7. Judah, p.197. Borisav Jović, *Posljednji dani*, pp.171-3, 302. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.208. Aleksandar Pavković, 'Yugoslavism's Last Stand: a Utopia of Serb Intellectuals', in Dejan Djokić (ed), *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), pp.252-67.

²²⁵ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2 - Document 13*, p.38.

²²⁶ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp. 141, 277. I. Tomljanović, 'Nek svako razvija svoje', *Borba*, 11/6/1990, p.4.

²²⁷ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.312, 322. Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20.

²²⁸ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.314.

relations and soften the Croats' attitude towards his programme, sometimes disingenuously. He also suggested that through an autonomous Krajina Croatia could annex the Bosnian Serbs and thereby Bosnia as a whole, which seems more an attempt to soften Croatia's attitude to Krajina autonomy, and perhaps links between the Croatian and Bosnian Krajinas, than a representation of Rašković's real programme.²²⁹ Finally, as discussed, Rašković's proposals in December included territorial autonomies and the right to self-determination.²³⁰

There is also evidence to suggest that Rašković genuinely supported his more radical proposals. For example, he argued for a united Krajina state privately to Milošević, Karadžić and Čosić, and continued to speak in favour of it in even when expressing his misgivings concerning Krajina's rapid secession.²³¹

Rather than simply revealing his underlying views, it seems that in 1991 there was a real shift in Rašković's thinking. Livada, after all, describes having to persuade Rašković in mid-1991, and it was only in January 1991, after SAOK was formed, that Rašković first emphasised the need for the SDS to rally Serbs remaining in Croatia, an issue he had previously neglected.²³² Rašković's support for Pupovac and other non-SDS Serbs in 1991-92 also reflected a significant shift in his attitude, as in 1990 he had denounced such people – Sabor vice-president Simo Rajić, for example - as illegitimate, and not 'good Serbs'.²³³

Rašković was not simply acting tactically in 1990, however, attempting to trick Tuđman into assisting Serb separatism. He genuinely wanted to resolve these matters peacefully, on the basis of agreement, no matter how unlikely that prospect really was. Like Tuđman, he sought to avoid war, despite conducting the nationalist politics that helped

²²⁹ Ibid., pp.314-5. Also: Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20.

²³⁰ Rašković, 'Primjedbe...!'

²³¹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.158. He also advocated Serbian self-determination in London in March 1991: Dragan Pavlović, p.201.

²³² See for example: HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 15, p.41. Momčilović, p.39.

²³³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.331. *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18.

create it. Tuđman sincerely sought a peaceful disintegration of Yugoslavia that would end with Croatia at least in its republican borders, if not much larger; Rašković seems to have sincerely sought, in the case of federal Yugoslavia's dissolution, that the Serbs in Croatia be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination.

2.4. Conclusions

The SDS and its leaders were often ambiguous, even contradictory, in their rhetoric and proposals. It was precisely this ambiguity that helped the party grow. Nevertheless, analysing Rašković's 'verbal acrobatics' and considering sources beyond party leaders' public rhetoric, it has been possible to determine clear and coherent proposals and their evolution, as well the agendas that lay behind them.

The proposals of the SDS were premised on the idea that the Serbian nation in Croatia was a sovereign nation with the right to decide 'with whom it will live, in what regime it will live and how it will connect with other nations in Yugoslavia'.²³⁴ The party favoured Yugoslav federalism as corresponding to the interests of the Serbian people. Ideally, Rašković and others would have preferred the maintenance of federal Yugoslavia – a point that is important to remember. In that case, they would only have sought rights within the Croatian state, though the rights they sought were fairly expansive, and included at least elements of territorial autonomy. Fuller territorial autonomy, moreover, was also always an option, and the rapidity with which 'regional autonomy' was dropped suggests that, to some extent at least, that was only a transitional or tactical demand.

The SDS argued that a confederation would divide the Serbian nation between several different states, and was thus contrary to its interests. Some in the SDS, such as Opačić and Zelenbaba, spoke of secession as the response to confederalisation from a very early stage, and initial indications from Rašković and Babić that they would opt for territorial autonomy in the case of a confederation, even independence, seem to have been largely transitional.

Contrary to the existing emphasis in the literature, there appears to have been little difference between the proposals of Rašković and Babić in 1990, the only significant

²³⁴ ICTY-Martić: E-141E (SNV Declaration, 25/7/1990).

one being that Babić's proposed territorial autonomy was somewhat more extensive. The real difference was over their attitude to negotiations and war, as Rašković, unlike Babić, emphasised the need for talks and a peaceful resolution of the crisis. In 1990 he hoped, unrealistically, to achieve Serbian sovereignty and self-determination through negotiations, although he also displayed some willingness to compromise. In 1991, however, Rašković's thought shifted, as the implementation of secession brought the situation closer to war. He began to have doubts about the Serbian project and became very concerned about the fate of Serbs outside Krajina, and critical of Krajina's rapid secession under Babić. It seems that – at times, at least - he even became open to autonomy in an independent Croatia. But he had no faith that Zagreb would ever agree to this and also accepted that this was currently unacceptable for Krajina, and so did not stand against their right to self-determination. Rather, he attempted to put the issue to one side for the time being and focus on saving the Serbs remaining in Croatia.

Did Rašković represent a missed opportunity for compromise? In some respects, yes. He favoured negotiations and a peaceful resolution of the conflict and, when confronted with war, partly moderated his stance, opening up to a possible compromise. But his political platform and agenda was quite far from the moderate programme of (non-territorial) cultural autonomy and equality within Croatia often attributed to him. Rašković, in fact, was the founder of the SDS policy of Serbian self-determination and of unilaterally building a Serbian autonomous region in Croatia as a means of realising that. The proposition that Milošević was responsible for creating or promoting these ideas among Serbs in Croatia, via support to Milan Babić, is therefore mistaken.

Chapter 3: The Two Nationalisms Collide

In the April-May 1990 elections in Croatia the nationalist Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) triumphed, acquiring power at the national level, while the SDS won control of a few Serb-majority municipalities around Knin. Upon assuming power, both parties began implementing their nationalist programmes. By the end of the year the stage was set for both political and military confrontation between Zagreb, intent on secession from Yugoslavia but retaining Croatia's existing borders, and the Krajina Serbs, committed to seceding from Croatia and 'remaining' in Yugoslavia or an enlarged Serbian state. With the outbreak of the 'Balvan Revolution' in August 1990, the Knin Krajina was also increasingly off-limits to the Croatian authorities, while militarisation of the crisis was well underway by the end of the year.

This chapter examines these developments - how the ideas of Rašković and the SDS were implemented in practice, and how the Krajina Serbs thereby came into increasing conflict with Zagreb. It gives particular consideration to the widespread notion that the conflict was provoked by Belgrade-backed Serb hardliners, who sabotaged opportunities for compromise as explored by Rašković, and instigated an unprovoked armed rebellion. It looks at how the Serbian rebellion in the Krajina unfolded, including the extent to which this was planned or orchestrated, and the militarisation of the conflict, as well as exploring Milan Babić's testimonies in The Hague blaming the war on Belgrade-connected extremists.

3.1. A New 'Historical Agreement'?

Despite their radically different agendas and perspectives, both Tuđman and Rašković saw some benefit in negotiating with each another. Importantly, both seem to have genuinely sought a peaceful solution for the question of Croat-Serb relations. The two had some contact in the spring, with Tuđman even inviting Rašković to attend the HDZ's founding assembly in February 1990.¹ Immediately after his election victory, Tuđman reiterated his commitment to full civic and national rights for Serbs in Croatia, including cultural autonomy. He also decided to offer the SDS, as the 'Serbian' party in Croatia, the position of one of the vice-premiers of the Croatian Sabor or Croatian Presidency, on the basis that such a post was 'traditionally' held by a Serb.

On 10 May Rašković came to HDZ headquarters and met with Tuđman. Rašković did not think that a vice-presidential post, on which Tuđman focused, would solve much, but agreed that the SDS would provide a candidate for one of the Sabor vice-presidents.² The two discussed a new basis for Croatian-Serbian relations, and Rašković, according to his recollections, wanted Tuđman to accept that the 'Croatian state is composed of Croatian and Serbian territories' and to constitutionally recognise the 'sovereignty of the Serbian national corpus'.³ Rašković deliberately referred to the 'Serbian national corpus' or 'being' rather than 'Serbian nation', in order to make the notion more palatable to Tuđman. However, as discussed, for Rašković this implied also the Serbs' right to autonomy and self-determination. Rašković also argued that, because of the genocide experienced in the Second World War, Serbs in Croatia must acquire a 'specific status'.⁴

Tuđman, however, responded that he would not allow dual sovereignty in Croatia - in Croatia only the Croatian nation could be sovereign – and maintained that the Serbs had

¹ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.15-16. Rašković apparently preferred the HDZ to the SKH: Dušan Bilandžić, *Povijest izbliza, memoarski zapisi 1945-2005* (Zagreb: Prometej, 2006), p.349.

² V. Saško, 'Potopiti sve mržnje', *Vecernji List*, 12/5/1990, p.36. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.227.

³ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.227. Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20. And: Knežević, 'Srpska demokratska stranka', pp.17-18.

⁴ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.312, 322. Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.227.

already had a privileged position in Croatia, which must be corrected.⁵ Nevertheless, the two agreed in principle that the SDS would propose a Sabor vice-president, and Rašković spoke very positively and optimistically of the meeting, even talking of a 'historic compromise that we have agreed upon in principle', which depended on how 'the position of the Serbian people will be formulated in the new constitution', and of working to calm both Serbophobia and Croatophobia. He also claimed that he and Tuđman discussed extinguishing Serbophobia in the HDZ, and putting 'hawks' in both parties into the background.⁶

Tuđman did in many respects put his 'hawks' into the background, publicly rebuking HDZ rightist Šime Đodan, for example, but Rašković evidently did not consider this enough, and claimed that an 'Ustaša core' in the HDZ was limiting Tuđman's freedom of action.⁷ Rašković's rhetoric varied considerably: at times he seemed highly optimistic about reaching an agreement with Zagreb, while elsewhere acknowledging that there was 'little' on which they could agree.⁸ But as the details of his meeting with Tuđman show, the two sides' programmes were radically apart, and no compromise had in fact been agreed.

This initial attempt at co-operation between the opposing nationalists in Croatia, moreover, was soon interrupted, as on 19 May the so-called 'Mlinar case' erupted. Miroslav Mlinar, president of the Benkovac branch of the SDS, claimed to have been attacked by unknown assailants – presumably Ustaše – who attempted to slit his throat, having a small wound on his neck as evidence. In Knin his injuries were proclaimed severe, and Rašković, Opačić and others soon all visited Mlinar in hospital, proclaiming him the first victim of resurrected Ustashism.⁹ The following day Rašković announced

⁵ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.232-3. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.227.

⁶ 'Historic Compromise', *Vjesnik*, 11/5/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-097, 18/5/1990. Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.232-3. Marinko Čulić, 'Čega se boje Srbi', *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15.

⁷ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.311. Žarko Domljan, *Visoko Podignimo Zastavu: Hrvatska – od negacije do priznanja* (Zagreb: Profil, 2010), p.113.

⁸ 'Šta je Rašković rekao Cimermanu', *Borba*, 8/6/1990, p.6.

⁹ Bennett, p.130. S. Stamatović, 'Asocijacije na ustaštvo', *Borba*, 23/5/1990, p.3.

that until it was confirmed what had occurred, the SDS was suspending its relations with the Sabor and all 'Croatocentric parties', including the League of Communists of Croatia (*Savez komunista Hrvatske*, SKH).¹⁰ SDS deputies therefore declined to attend the new Sabor's constitutive session on 30 May, while Opačić, who had been announced as the SDS's candidate for Sabor vice-president, froze his candidacy.

Rašković and others capitalised on this event, which he considered an example of 'triumphalist aggression',¹¹ and which was heavily publicised in the Serbian media.¹² The HDZ condemned the attack, but it was not long before there were suggestions that this was really a 'scenario' staged by the Serbs. It does in fact seem fairly certain that the incident was faked. SDS founder Ratko Ličina acknowledges that it was later confirmed that Mlinar staged the incident for self-publicity, to be the first victim of the new Ustaše.¹³ Rašković may have felt he had no choice but to go along with the scenario – although he did continue to draw on the case later, too.¹⁴ His motivation in suspending contacts seems to have been to retain control over Serbian reaction: if he was the one to suspend contacts, he would then have the power to resume contacts, also.¹⁵

The Mlinar incident demonstrated how many in the SDS favoured a more radical stance towards the Croatian authorities, and that Rašković's freedom of action was constrained. It certainly had a polarising and radicalising effect - but its importance should not be exaggerated. Contacts with the Croats resumed after a few weeks, when the situation had calmed, and Opačić again said he would take his vice-presidential post.¹⁶ Moreover, at the end of May there was actually a case of the HDZ and SDS (Tuđman and Rašković) having successfully agreed to prevent clashes, in a Orthodox-Catholic row

¹⁰ I.G., 'I nož u politici?', *Borba*, 22/5/1990, p.14.

¹¹ Mladen Pavković, 'Svaka agresija izaziva kontra udar', *Glas Podravine*, 15/6/1990, p.7.

¹² See, for example: Bennett, p.130. Zoran Marković, 'The Nation: Victims and Vengeance', in Nebojša Popov (ed), *The Road to War in Serbia: Traumas and Catharsis* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000), p.602.

¹³ Interview Ratko Ličina, SDS official (Belgrade: 2007). Also: ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula, T394.

¹⁴ For example: V. Vignjević, 'Nećemo kriv', *Borba*, 6/9/1990.

¹⁵ Marinko Čulić, 'Čega se boje Srbi', *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15. Snežana Stamatović, 'Srbi po rodu – Hrvatska po domu', *Borba*, 18/6/1990, p.7. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.309.

¹⁶ Reuf Mirko Kapetanović, *Kronologija zbivanja u Republici Hrvatskoj, 1989.-1995.* (Zagreb: Informator, 1995), pp.6-7. Jasna Babić, 'Pod zvijezdom razdora', *Danas*, No.436, 19/6/1990, pp.17-19.

about a church in the village of Cetina near Knin.¹⁷ Importantly, the Mlinar case did not undermine the Rašković-Tuđman 'agreement', as there was no real agreement, or prospect of an agreement, to undermine.

¹⁷ Marinko Čulić, 'Čega se boje Srbi', *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15. Marinko Čulić, 'Osvajači svetog spasa', *Danas*, 29/5/1990, pp.13-15.

3.2. Collision

The SDS's National Programme and the Croatian Response

Immediately upon assuming power at the end of May 1990, both the HDZ and the SDS began implementing their national programmes. In the case of the SDS, this meant the creation of the 'Association of Municipalities of North Dalmatia and Lika', which the SDS formally decided to form on 20 May.¹⁸ As discussed in Chapter 2, this was always intended to cover a wider area, and was limited in scope only in order to expedite its formation. The SDS wanted to exploit the constitutional opportunity to form such Associations while it still existed (it would be harder for Zagreb to ban it when it was already formed, Rašković reasoned),¹⁹ and by the end of June half the projected members had joined – the SDS-run municipalities of Knin, Lapac and Gračac – and its formation was declared. By mid-August, eight of the eleven Serb-majority Krajina municipalities were members. The SDS also implemented its national programme in Knin, passing a decision on the official use of both Cyrillic and Latin scripts in the municipality, and ordering the replacement of signs approaching the town, written in Latin alone, with bi-scriptual signs with Cyrillic on top. (It was also decided that official documents would be issued in Latin only on request, an early sign of ethnic exclusivism.)²⁰

The new Croatian leadership was quick to respond to these moves, which it saw as challenges to its authority and to Croatian sovereignty. In the Association they saw a 'path for the creation of a state of Serbs in Croatia', 'separation, overthrowing of the territorial integrity of Croatia' and a 'campaign to make impossible, to prevent the constitution of normal democratic authorities in Croatia'.²¹ They therefore quickly

¹⁸ Knežević, 'Srpska demokratska stranka', p.19.

¹⁹ Marinko Čulić, 'Pohod udruženih voždova', *Danas*, 10/7/1990, pp.13-15.

²⁰ S. Stamatović, 'Zajednica povezana ćirilicom', *Borba*, 7/6/1990, p.4.

²¹ Sanja Modrić, 'Iracionalni strah za zbuñjivanje', *Borba*, 28-9/7/1990, p.5. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.311-2.

moved to ban it, removing the possibility for municipalities to form such regional groupings.

The perception of the Croatian side was justified: Rašković did envisage the Association as creating the basis for Serbian self-determination, including secession from Croatia. At this stage, however, he emphasised that he merely sought cultural/regional autonomy via the Association – which had not yet assumed any powers beyond those legal at the time - and to many Serbs it seemed that this relatively moderate agenda was being suppressed. The Association and municipal autonomy also enabled resistance to the imposition of Croatian exclusivism by Zagreb – creating a 'base of resistance in the case of anti-Serbian behaviour of the Croatian Sabor' - and was undoubtedly supported by many Serbs for that reason.²²

Moreover, although the Croatian leadership in theory had nothing against biculturalism in Serb-majority municipalities, the raising of bicultural signs in Knin was taken as an assertion of the 'Serbian' nature of Knin, requiring response. Such autonomous action was also seen as part of the campaign for Serbian autonomy or separation from Croatia. As Tuđman told Rašković in July, 'I am for full cultural autonomy, but please, I tell you, when that is determined by the constitution and law - we will not allow illegal actions'.²³ The bicultural signs do not, in fact, seem to have been illegal, but the government nevertheless ordered their removal.²⁴ As Knin refused, road-workers from Šibenik attempted three times over the following month and a half to remove them, prevented each time by Serb crowds. This only served to heighten the tension in the region and undermine the credibility of the government's talk of cultural autonomy, and was criticised as unnecessary by Croatian liberals.²⁵

²² Milorad Vučelić, 'Srbi i hrvatski plebisciti', *NIN*, 20/5/1990, pp.16-20.

²³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.322.

²⁴ Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21.

²⁵ For example: Ivo Goldstein, 'What People Are Keeping Quiet About', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, p.25, in FBIS-EER-90-134, 27/9/1990. Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21.

HDZ Nation-Building and Constitutional Amendments

A key priority of the HDZ was crafting a new constitution for a post-communist independent Croatian nation-state. As this would take some months, the new authorities quickly drafted amendments to the existing constitution relating to matters deemed immediately relevant. First announced by the Croatian Presidency on 20 June and then, after some public discussion and alterations, passed by the Sabor on 25 July, the amendments dealt primarily with three areas: de-communisation; Croatian sovereignty and nation-building; and preventing the implementation of the SDS's programme.²⁶

The word 'Socialist' was dropped from the republic's name, the office of President was created and republican organs were renamed to those of a state (Ministries, Government) rather than a socialist republic. Following Slovenia's declaration of sovereignty at the beginning of July, the stipulation that 'The Republic of Croatia is the carrier of political and economy sovereignty' was also added to Article 1 of the constitution.

The new authorities aimed to reduce the existing decentralisation and high degree of municipal self-government, which, without the centralised communist party machinery exercising control, was expansive.²⁷ This would also prevent the utilisation of this decentralisation by the SDS. Initially, it was prescribed that a new republican law would regulate how municipalities could co-operate in Associations, and a constitutional basis would be created to enable republican authorities to issue 'mandatory instructions' to municipal bodies.²⁸ Subsequently, 'the intentions of establishing a "Serbian district" or even a separate "Serbian state" in Croatia' were deemed 'already so manifest' that later

²⁶ 'Odluka o proglašenju Amandmana LXIV. do LXXV. na Ustava Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No.31, 28/7/1990. 'Odluka da se pristupi raspravi o promjeni Ustava Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No.28, 30/6/1990.

²⁷ Marinko Čulić, 'Thank You for the Star', *Danas*, 17/7/1990, pp.20-22, in FBIS-EER-90-124, 30/8/1990. Interview Drago Dmitrovic, Secretary of the SKH, 1986-89 (Zagreb: 9/10/2009). Domljan, p.118.

²⁸ 'Odluka da se pristupi raspravi o promjeni Ustava Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No.28, 30/6/1990.

in July the possibility of forming Associations of Municipalities was completely removed, in effect from the moment of adoption, with possible inter-municipal co-operation left to be mandated by future laws.²⁹ It was largely on this basis that Croatia's Constitutional Court subsequently proclaimed the SDS's Association illegal.³⁰

In order to give the HDZ fuller freedom to implement its programme, meanwhile, the constitutional procedure for nationally sensitive issues to go through the Sabor's Council of National Equality - potentially delaying laws and consequently requiring a two-thirds majority - was abolished. (The new HDZ-dominated Sabor, in fact, had never even constituted this body.)³¹ Another amendment declared Latin the official script of Croatia, a question the Croatian constitution had not previously regulated, and a repudiation of the previous principle of equality of Latin and Cyrillic, enshrined in the federal constitution.³² This reflected the HDZ's Croatian nationalism, but was also a reaction to Knin's decision, which would now be illegal. The initial amendment then continued to state that, 'to secure equality', 'The Cyrillic or any other script used in addition will be subject to special legislation.'³³ This was subsequently altered to state that 'In addition to the official use of the Latin script, Cyrillic or any other script may be used in municipalities where the majority of the population still uses it, subject to legislation.'³⁴ Though this could be read as implying that Cyrillic would be in official use in Serb-majority municipalities, the text was now technically more restrictive, as Cyrillic's use was limited to 'municipalities where the majority of the population still uses it' – which probably excluded every municipality in Croatia. More significantly, the official use of Cyrillic was contingent on further legislation – which was yet to be passed – and was

²⁹ Marinko Čulić, 'Thank You for the Star', *Danas*, 17/7/1990, pp.20-22, in FBIS-EER-90-124, 30/8/1990. 'Odluka o proglašenju Amandmana LXIV. do LXXV. na Ustava Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No.31, 28/7/1990.

³⁰ 'Odluka Ustavnog suda Hrvatske broj U/I-214/1990 od 28. kolovoza 1990', *Narodne Novine*, No.35, 4/9/1990.

³¹ S. Vranić, 'Suverenitet je nedjeljiv, ali...', *Borba*, 3/7/1990, p.5.

³² Although Latin was overwhelmingly dominant in Croatia and Cyrillic in declining use among Croatian Serbs, citizens in theory always had the right to, for example, correspond with the state in Cyrillic. Interview Mile Dakić, President of Vojnić municipality in the 1970s (Belgrade: 5/11/2007).

³³ 'Odluka da se pristupi raspravi o promjeni Ustava Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No.28, 30/6/1990.

³⁴ 'Odluka o proglašenju Amandmana LXIV. do LXXV. na Ustava Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No.31, 28/7/1990.

thus, for now at least, illegal, and this was something which republican organs insisted on enforcing.³⁵ This, of course, could only further undermine the credibility of Zagreb's promises of cultural autonomy for Serbs in Croatia.

Finally, and most controversially, the flag and coat-of-arms used by the HDZ were adopted as the official state symbols, to be displayed throughout the republic, on government buildings and police caps. At the time the HDZ's emblems bore a striking similarity to those used by the NDH, including the 'šahovnica' (chessboard) emblem beginning with a white rather than red square, as well as its shape and its positioning on the flag.³⁶ This move therefore met with particularly widespread opposition from Serbs. (In December 1990 the flag and coat-of-arms were altered, and Tuđman subsequently opposed use of the earlier design due to its Ustaša associations, but by this point the link was already cemented.)³⁷

The most controversial change in 1990 related to the constitutional definition of Croatia, which was previously defined as 'the national state of the Croatian nation, the state of the Serbian nation in Croatia, and the state of the nationalities which live within her'.³⁸ From their very inauguration in May 1990 HDZ officials were 'skipping' the Serbs in their definitions of Croatia and referring to the Croatian nation alone, including in official documents, and it was fairly clear that the Serbs' status was to be downgraded.³⁹ In late July Tuđman announced the government's first draft constitutional proposals, downgrading the Serbs (though still mentioning them, in a list with other minorities).⁴⁰ The July amendments did not concern this, however, and no such change was effected

³⁵ Miškulin, 'Srpska pobuna u općini Pakrac 1990.-1991', pp.368-9.

³⁶ This can be seen in, for example, video footage of the constitutive session of the Croatian Sabor on 30 May 1990, as well as other HDZ rallies from 1990. For example: 'Proslava dana HRVATSKE DRŽAVNOSTI Zagreb 30. svibnja 1990.', *YouTube*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gPDAvRsMXQ>.

³⁷ Interview Ivo Banac, Croatian historian, politician and human rights activist (Zagreb: 8/10/2009).

³⁸ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.88.

³⁹ See: Mirić, p.35. Davor Butković & Dubravko Grakalić, *Prilozi za političku biografiju Dr. Franje Tuđmana* (Zagreb: Azur Journal, 1991), pp.76-85. ICTY-Milošević: E-D334.16e (Document of the Croatian Assembly, 3/7/1990). S. Vranić, 'Suverenitet je nedjeljiv, ali...', *Borba*, 3/7/1990, p.5. Domljan, pp.117-8.

⁴⁰ Gordana Grbić, 'Mitingom na amandman', *Borba*, 4-5/8/1990, p.4. Slaven Letica, 'Naputak za Izradu Ustava Republike Hrvatske', 13-14/7/1990 (author's copy).

until December. The primary reason for changing this constitutional definition was certainly ideological, but it is also worth noting that it was partly motivated by a belief that the 1974 constitution had inadvertently granted the Serbs in Croatia the right to self-determination, which had to be corrected.⁴¹

On 25 July the Croatian Sabor passed the amendments by majority vote, despite opposition from the SDS and other Serbs, and the former communist (and now opposition) SKH-SDP (*Savez komunista Hrvatske – Stranka demokratske promjene*, League of Communists of Croatia – Party of Democratic Change), which refused to even vote on the amendments affecting national equality.⁴² The course was thus set for collision with the SDS.

SDS Response: Mobilisation

The SDS reacted strongly to both the announced amendments and the anticipated downgrading of the Serbs' constitutional status, as well as potential moves towards the HDZ's declared aim of Croatian independence. At a meeting in Knin on 6 July attended by the SDS leadership and representatives of a number of Serb-majority municipalities, all amendments except the removal of the word 'Socialist' were rejected. The use of the new flag and coat-of-arms was particularly opposed, especially in areas where Serbs were the majority. The amendments, Rašković argued, again 'treat the Serbian nation as a disturbing factor', not accepting the Serbian nation's 'presence in the republic, their rights, their Serbian name'.⁴³ The SDS not only exaggerated what the amendments entailed, but also confused the question of the definition of Croatia. In his invitation to the 6 July meeting, for example, Babić emphasised that the 'central issue about which they have to talk relates to the definition of sovereignty, that is to say the proposal which emphasises and insists on sovereignty of Croatian nation in Croatia', while in

⁴¹ Mario Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks: Diplomatski procesi iza zatvorenih vrata 1990.-1997* (Zagreb: Globus, 2000), p.48. Interview Drago Dimitrović, Secretary of the SKH, 1986-89 (Zagreb: 9/10/2009).

⁴² 'Hrvatska nije više socijalistička', *Borba*, 27/7/1990, p.6

⁴³ S. Stamatović, 'Amandmani vode u raskol', *Borba*, 7-8/7/1990, p.4. R. Stević, 'Razum mora prevladati', *Borba*, 23/7/1990, p.14.

August Babić reportedly complained that 'with the amendments... the Serbian nation in Croatia lost its earlier status of a constitutive element of the Croatian state', a claim also made in the Serbian press.⁴⁴ As noted, however, this article was as yet unchanged. In essence, the amendments were taken as the trigger for the conflict to begin, the fight for Serbdom against Croatcentrism, and for the mobilisation of the Serbian people behind that cause, regardless of the fact that the most relevant changes were not yet effected.

Rašković had previously spoken of resorting to extra-parliamentary means in the event of Croatcentricism prevailing in the Sabor, including a referendum of the Serbian people. With the passing of the amendments imminent, in mid-July Opačić suggested to Babić that the Serbs organise a mass rally to proclaim Serbian autonomy. Babić agreed, but to the less radical idea of just confirming Serbian sovereignty and adopting a Declaration on this.⁴⁵ The date was set for 25 July, the day that the amendments were due to be passed.

Rašković was initially reluctant to convene the rally, feeling it was too early and not wanting to complicate his talks with Tuđman. Babić recalled him being 'very suspicious' of the need for that rally.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Rašković went along with it and was the main speaker. It was estimated that about 120,000 Serbs attended the gathering in Srb, Donji Lapac, where a Serbian National Council (SNV) was created, consisting of SDS leaders, some municipal officials and Sabor deputies. The Declaration on Sovereignty, discussed in the previous chapter, was also adopted. On 31 July the SNV met and, on Rašković's proposal, Babić was elected its president.⁴⁷ Although the SNV was dominated by the SDS, particularly Babić's allies, a few non-SDS figures, such as Mile Dakić, president of a small pro-Yugoslav party, were co-opted into it, Dakić becoming one of two SNV

⁴⁴ S. Stamatović, 'Građanski ili etnički suverenitet?', *Borba*, 6/7/1990. 'Da razum prevlada', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.1. Julijana Mojsilović, 'Was Yugoslavia on the brink of civil war?', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 25/8/1990, pp.1-2. 'Serbian Interior Minister Views Internal Security', *Tanjug*, 22/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-205, 23/10/1990.

⁴⁵ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.6-7. Mladen Pleše, 'The Passions of Conflict', *Vjesnik*, 13/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-140, 20/7/1990. Milardović, p.157.

⁴⁶ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.7. And: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043, SDS official. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.315.

⁴⁷ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 18, p.48.

Vice-Presidents. Its formally non-party nature enabled the SNV to posit itself as a representative organ of all Serbs in Croatia, furthering the leading position of the SDS among Serbs in Croatia (or, at least, the Serbs in Krajina).

It was then announced that the SNV would organise a referendum on 'Serbian autonomy', from 19 August to 2 September, for all Serbs living or born in Croatia. Despite his initial hesitation, Rašković embraced this mobilisation and the referendum proposal. The goal, as he explained, was to refute Croatian imputations that the SDS only represented a small part of the Serbian population, and demonstrate that its programme in fact had wide support. It would also test whether the Serbian population in fact supported Serbian autonomy.⁴⁸

The referendum was irregular in that it simply asked people to vote 'Yes' or 'No' to 'Serbian autonomy', with no elaboration. There was, therefore, significant confusion and suspicion on the Croatian side about the true intentions of the referendum. As Rašković and others explained, the referendum was on the ideas of the Declaration and Serbian autonomy in general, and subsequent to the referendum the SDS would then, vindicated by its popular mandate, draw up proposals as to precisely what forms of autonomy they were suggesting, or, as Rašković said elsewhere, implement them themselves.⁴⁹ In short, the referendum was an exercise in mobilising the Serb population behind the SDS's programme, demonstrating that they did have popular support and thereby gaining a credible mandate for future actions, including the unilateral building of autonomy.

As noted by Croatian intellectual Žarko Puhovski, the referendum, though flawed and dubious in many respects, was not illegal. The right to such self-expression was guaranteed by both Yugoslav and Croatian constitutions, as the SNV and SDS began to point out.⁵⁰ On 16 August the SNV also renamed the referendum a 'plebiscite', a term more clearly in harmony with the law, and noted that official voting papers were not

⁴⁸ 'Destablizacije ustaštva', *Borba*, 30/7/1990, p.4. S. Stamatovic, 'Referendum o srpskoj autonomiji', *Borba*, 2/8/1990, p.8. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 18, pp.50-2, 55.

⁴⁹ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.254-5, 275, 278-9. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 18, p.55.

⁵⁰ 'Pokvareni telefoni', *Borba*, 16/8/1990, p.5.

being used, while Rašković and others emphasised that it was only about expressing a stand-point on autonomy, not taking a decision on proclaiming autonomy, as Croats feared.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Zagreb reacted strongly. In the Sabor on 25 July Tuđman claimed that the rally in Srb was not justified or provoked by any of their actions, but part of the 'scenario' directed by Belgrade to destabilise Croatia.⁵² The referendum was seen as part of this scenario, an attempt to implement or justify Serbian separatism, and was immediately proclaimed illegal and banned.⁵³ Tuđman said that they 'would not hesitate' to use police force if necessary, while Croatian Interior Minister Josip Boljkovac and other government officials spoke of arresting the referendum's organisers, threatening sentences of up to five years.⁵⁴ The then Prime Minister Stjepan Mesić has confirmed that their intention was to physically prevent the referendum.⁵⁵ Babić and the SNV, on the other hand, insisted that it would be held regardless, while Rašković warned that in the event of police repression they would have to call on the JNA for protection.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, tensions were also increasing between the government and the Association, which had been proclaimed illegal. Tuđman argued that these municipalities were behaving like 'states within a state', threatening to cut off their funding.⁵⁷ As soon as the Association had been formed there had, in fact, been ideas in Zagreb to 'cut off the faucets', and municipalities such as Glina complained of an 'economic blockade' that began as soon as they joined it.⁵⁸ Attempts to remove the bicultural signs in Knin were also ongoing, the third attempt coming on 16 August.⁵⁹ Thus, tension was rising and

⁵¹ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.254.

⁵² 'Tuđman on 'Kosovoisation'', *Tanjug*, 25/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-144, 26/7/1990.

⁵³ S. Stamatović, 'Glasanje će ipak biti', *Borba*, 6/8/1990, p.14.

⁵⁴ Snežana Stamatović, 'Strahovanja i nelagode', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.3. 'Fantomsko izjasnjvanje', *Borba*, 16/8/1990, p.5. V. Đorđević, 'Ne formiramo nikakve garde', *Borba*, 15/8/1990, p.3.

⁵⁵ BBC-DOY: Stipe Mesić, pp.2-5.

⁵⁶ Dušan Pilić, 'La Croazia teme la guerra civile si riaccende il conflitto con i Serbi', *La Repubblica*, 15/8/1990. Snežana Stamatović, 'Strahovanja i nelagode', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.3.

⁵⁷ 'Tuđman: Croat Serbs 'Well-Organized Conspiracy'', *Tanjug*, 14/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-158, 15/8/1990. Gordana Gojak, 'Razrađen scenarij za rušenje vlasti', *Borba*, 15/8/1990, p.1.

⁵⁸ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.322. 'Croat Government Meets With Serb Municipalities', *Tanjug*, 10/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-156, 13/8/1990.

⁵⁹ Snežana Stamatović, 'Strahovanja i nelagode', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.3. 'Ćirilica ostaje na cestama',

both sides were heading towards confrontation. And, as we shall see, this was also in the context of the beginning of the militarisation of the crisis.

HDZ-SDS Talks

In this period of controversy over the amendments and the referendum, contacts still took place between the HDZ and SDS, despite the beginnings of opposition from Serb hardliners. Little resulted from such contact, however.

At the Sabor session on 29 June, SDS deputies attended and made some suggestions. Opačić, for example, advocated a dual-chamber Sabor, maintaining Cyrillic as an equal official script and including Serb symbols in the Croatian flag – proposals which were, unsurprisingly, rejected.⁶⁰ In June all municipal leaders, including Knin's, had attended introductory meetings with Prime Minister Mesić in Zagreb, and on 16 July a similar meeting was held with Sabor president Žarko Domljan. These were not occasions for negotiations, however, and Domljan merely stated that the illegal campaign for autonomy would not be tolerated, while Babić polemicised about the amendments and Serb rights.⁶¹ Various republican officials also had contacts and meetings with municipal officials on economic projects,⁶² while Rašković continued his contact with the Croatian leadership. Tuđman advisor Letica gave him the first draft constitutional proposals before their announcement, and on 23 July Rašković again met with Tuđman, and Letica, for a fairly short, 25-minute meeting. He attempted to persuade Tuđman not to ban the Association and to recognise Serbian sovereignty. Although the meeting passed amicably and the two agreed to draw up proposals on Serbian cultural autonomy in Croatia, there was no suggestion of any shift in their positions.⁶³

Borba, 15/8/1990, p.12. Zvonko Tarle, 'Niko više ne spava', *Borba*, 18-19/8/1990, p.11.

⁶⁰ Marinko Čulić, 'Olako uspunjene brzina', *Danas*, pp.16-17.

⁶¹ G. Gojak, 'Tolerancija umjesto sektastva', *Borba*, 17/7/1990, p.5. Domljan, pp.118-9. Interview Veljko Popović, President of Knin Executive Council, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 8/11/2007). BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.3-4.

⁶² BBC-DOY: Slavko Degoricija. Interview Dušan Vjestica, President of Gračac Executive Council, 1990-92 (Belgrade: 9/11/2007). Jelena Lovrić, 'We'll Go To Knin, Too...!', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.18-19, in FBIS-EER-91-075, 4/6/1991.

⁶³ See: Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.305-323.

These talks, and Rašković's interest in negotiating with Tuđman, soon received a blow, moreover, when Zagreb leaked a transcript of the talks to the Croatian weekly *Danas*, which published it in full on 31 July. Rašković had distanced himself from his 'hawks', emphasised his disagreements with Milošević, and made some statements such as that his grandchildren were Croats and, famously, the Serbs were a 'crazy people'. Within context, these were understandable in his efforts to win over Tuđman, but it caused a crisis within the SDS. Many were angry with him, complaining that he did not consult others on the stance he would take in talks,⁶⁴ and at the party's next main board meeting on 7 August Opačić and Zelenbaba sought Rašković's resignation, on the grounds that the transcript revealed him to be 'neither Serbian nor democratic'.⁶⁵ However, Rašković was still respected as the popular leader of the party, and Opačić and Zelenbaba lacked support within the party to depose him at this time of conflict with the Croatian leadership.⁶⁶

Rašković himself justified most of his statements in the transcripts but also claimed that they had been doctored by Zagreb, in an attempt to undermine him. Letica confirms that the purpose of the leak was to destroy Rašković's credibility, on the grounds that he had been misinforming the public about the content of their talks.⁶⁷ This is often seen as a key moment in Rašković's downfall. In fact, Rašković's reputation among his public support base in Croatia apparently remained intact.⁶⁸ Certain hardliners in the party 'never forgave him',⁶⁹ but he still had the support of most, with a great many, including some hardliners, believing his version of events.⁷⁰ Rašković's faith in talks with Tuđman, and his willingness to personally engage in such dialogue, was, however, damaged.

⁶⁴ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.7. Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Organisational Secretary of the SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 5/8/2007); Petar Štikovac, President of SDS Executive Board, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 5/8/2007).

⁶⁵ Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007).

⁶⁶ Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac (Belgrade: 5/8/2007).

⁶⁷ Interview Slaven Letica (Zagreb: 10/2009). Also: Caplan, p.118. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.65.

⁶⁸ Dejan Jović, 'I Tuđman i Rašković rastu', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.30-33.

⁶⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Branko Popović, T8090.

⁷⁰ For example: Interview Branko Marjanović. Vice-President of SDS, 1990-1 (Belgrade: 6/11/2007). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Branko Popović, T8090-91.

Additional talks took place on 9 August. Sabor President Domljan and Justice Minister Milan Ramljak invited officials of the Serb-majority municipalities to discuss the announced referendum. Both sides simply expressed their viewpoints, however, the Croats telling the Serbs that they were equal in Croatia but could not hold the referendum. Moreover, from North Dalmatia and Lika representatives of only two municipalities, SKH-SDP-run Korenica and the SDS's Lapac, attended, Babić evidently having rejected participation. (Though the SDS president of Obrovac came to meet Domljan the following day.)⁷¹

In this period, there were thus many HDZ-SDS contacts, and channels for communication largely remained open, despite the beginnings of opposition from Serb hardliners. However, little resulted from such contacts due to the huge discrepancy between HDZ and SDS agendas. The very nature of the SDS and HDZ programmes, including that advocated by Rašković, had rapidly created sharp political conflict. Part of this was certainly a consequence of the 'societal security dilemma' described by Roe.⁷² Though the SDS had an agenda of Serb self-determination, the Association was also formed to resist possible Croatcentricism and many Serbs undoubtedly supported it for that reason. For the HDZ, however, any hint of autonomous Serb action was seen, understandably, as part of a slippery slope towards secession. They therefore decided to react firmly, but in doing so turned Serbs further against the authorities and helped undermine Zagreb's promises of Serb rights.

At the same time, both the HDZ and SDS had an interest in political conflict in order to further ethnicise politics, split the SKH-SDP, and homogenise 'their' nations behind them. In this respect, the rhetoric of both Rašković and Tuđman was contributing to the creation of a situation which neither, in fact, desired: a Croat-Serb conflict in Croatia.

⁷¹ Gordana Gojak, 'Nedvidljivi autonomaši', *Borba*, 11-12/8/1990, p.11. 'Croat Government Meets With Serb Municipalities', *Tanjug*, 10/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-156, 13/8/1990. Domljan, p.130.

⁷² Roe, *op. cit.*

Some of the SDS's more radical responses, such as the mobilisation behind the SNV, were initiated by hardliners against Rašković's wishes – again suggesting Rašković's genuine desire to avoid conflict through talks. He subsequently embraced the idea of a referendum, however, and his differences with the hardliners were primarily tactical – he, too, was strongly opposed to the constitutional amendments and advocated unilaterally building Serbian autonomy.

Finally, we can note that the Croatian side was clearly open to talks, despite the criticism this drew from some on the HDZ right, whereas in the SDS the opposition of hardliners was beginning to become visible. However, although prepared to talk to the Serbs, the HDZ showed little visible interest in compromise, and was, in fact, driving through its programme without regard to the wishes of the SDS (or other opponents).

3.3. Background to the 'Balvan Revolution'

On 17 August 1990 Croatia was brought to the brink of armed conflict. Serbs in the Knin Krajina region rose in rebellion, seizing arms and throwing up improvised barricades, including logs on roads, to prevent access by Croatian forces. Thereafter, rhetoric escalated dramatically, both sides began to arm themselves and the Knin Krajina increasingly separated from Croatian control, forming SAO Krajina at the end of the year. This so-called 'Balvan (Log) Revolution', named after the aforementioned logs, was a pivotal moment, and was later celebrated in the RSK as the beginning of the war.

The Croatian Security Dilemma

When it came to power in May 1990, the new Croatian leadership faced a very real security dilemma. There was a realistic prospect of Croatian Serb unrest or separatist politics, armed conflict with Serbia, or a coup or other intervention by the JNA. In addition, immediately before the HDZ assumed power the JNA had disarmed the Territorial Defence (*Teritorijalna odbrana*, TO) of Croatia, placing its arms (approximately 200,000) under JNA control.⁷³ The JNA did this throughout Yugoslavia in order to prevent the possibility of inter-national war, particularly with the election of secessionists in Croatia and Slovenia, and – contrary to some claims – Serb areas in Croatia and Bosnia were not exempted.⁷⁴ It was an understandable move – hundreds of thousands of arms would otherwise have been easily accessible not just to anti-Yugoslav governments, but everyone. But the HDZ now reasonably saw a threat to its goals and to Croatia. The Croatian leadership was left with a police force of just 15,000 men, capable of quenching some Serbian unrest, but not of fighting the JNA. Moreover, almost half of this force consisted of Serbs and Yugoslavs, whose loyalties to the new

⁷³ Mario Nobile & Slaven Letica, *Rat Protiv Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Globus, 1991), p.72.

⁷⁴ See, for example: ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P526.C.1 (Report of SR-BH TO, 13/9/1990). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1675 (Report of SR-BH TO, 18/2/1992). Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.152.

authorities were understandably suspect, as well as many pro-Yugoslav Croats.⁷⁵ The HDZ therefore saw as necessary the creation and arming of a loyal force that could, if necessary, resist the JNA or the Serbs in a fight for Croatian independence (which would also fulfil the HDZ's political goal of building an army for an independent Croatia).⁷⁶

Although there is convincing evidence that the HDZ right desired a conflict in order to expel the Serbs from Croatia,⁷⁷ it seems that the dominant factions in the party and state leadership sought to avoid a war. Tuđman was convinced that Titoist elements in the army were still dominant and its alliance with Serbia not yet complete, and thus full-scale conflict with the JNA and the Serbs could and should be avoided, with Croatian independence being won gradually via negotiations and international support.⁷⁸ Croatian

⁷⁵ This over-representation was greatest in the lower ranks, i.e. ordinary militiamen, and considerably less in the leading positions. It had been even higher before the 1980s, when there were deliberate measures to increase the proportion of Croats in the MUP. Interview Simo Rajić, SRH Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs, 1982-86 (Zagreb: 30/9/2009). Zdenko Radelić et al., *Stvaranje hrvatske države i Domovinski rat* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), p.82. Ratko Bubalo, 'Zločudna igra brojkama', *Arkin*, No. 19/20 (5/8/1994). David Raic, *Statehood and the Law of Self-Determination* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2002), p.392. Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945.-1991., od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), pp.573-4. Chapter 'Kratak pregled vojnih dejstava' in Ilija T. Radaković, *Besmislena Yu-ratovanja 1991-1995* (Belgrade: Društvo za istinu o antifašističkoj narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945, 2003), online version, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.znaci.net/00001/23.htm>.

⁷⁶ See: BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman. Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Odabir mladih Hrvata za tečaj prvog hrvatskog redarstvenika', *Hrvatski Focus* (11/2/2011), accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hrvatski-fokus.hr/index.php/feljtomi/1897-prije-dvadeset-godina-odabir-mladih-hrvata-za-teaj-prvoga-hrvatskog-redarstvenika>. Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Predsjednik Franjo Tuđman vodio je Hrvatsku na najracionalniji i jedini mogući način', *Hrvatski Focus* (4/2/2011), accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hrvatski-fokus.hr/index.php/feljtomi/1833-prije-dvadeset-godina-predsjednik-franjo-tuman-vodio-je-hrvatsku-na-najracionalniji-i-jedini-mogu-nain->.

⁷⁷ See, for example: Mirić, pp.18, 63-4. Bilandžić, pp.351, 380-2. Martin Špegelj, *Sjećnja vojnika* (Zagreb: Znanje, 2001). Boljkovac. R. Stević, 'Naozi na seobu Srba', *Borba*, 10/9/1990, p.3.

⁷⁸ See, for example: BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman. Nobile, pp.49, 54, 66-7, 84, 109, 135, 156, 162. Zdravko Tomac, *Iza zatvorenih vrata - tako se stvarala Hrvatska država* (Zagreb: Organizator, 1992), pp.39, 91. Špegelj, *Sjećanje vojnika*. Domljan, pp.107, 301, 323-4, 329-30. Hrvoje Šarinić, *Svi moji tajni pregovori sa Slobodanom Miloševićem* (Zagreb: Globus International, 2003), p.24. Mirko Valentić, *Rat protiv Hrvatske, 1991-1995.: Velikosrpski projekti od ideja do realizacije* (Zagreb: Hrvatski Memorijalno-Dokumentacijski Centar Domovinskog Rata, 2010), p.154. ICTY-Prlic(et al): E-4D1330 (Interview with Franjo Tuđman, *Hrvatski Vojnik*, 24/4/1992). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Imra Agotić, T23262. Vlado Vurusic, 'General Kadijević je s maršalom Jazovim dogovarao puč u SSSR-u i Jugoslaviji [Interview with Anton Tus]', *Jutarnji List*, 4/11/2007. 'Dušan Bilandžić: Tuđman mi je rekao - 'Kad podijelimo Bosnu, ja i Sloba bit ćemo saveznici'', *Nacional*, 5/6/2012. Mladen Pleše, 'Tuđman je bio spreman izbjeći u Austriju, tamo oformiti vladu i povesti gerilski rat u Hrvatskoj! [Interview with Darko Bekić]', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21/10/2006.

Interior Minister Boljkovac, who was heavily involved in Croatian militarisation, meanwhile, was the foremost advocate in the Croatian leadership of Serbian rights and of negotiations, later helping save Serb civilians from liquidation during the war.⁷⁹ But he, Tuđman and others felt the necessity of preparing for defence and war, should their opponents not allow them to secure their goals peacefully.

Thus, the Croatian motivation to build a new armed force was primarily defensive. But this was not how it seemed to Serbs, and it in fact contributed greatly to creating the very conflict that Tuđman and Boljkovac hoped to avoid.

An Army Within the Police

As soon as the HDZ assumed power it took on the task of transforming the ethnic balance in the police and forming new, military-type units loyal to the government.⁸⁰ This was done primarily through new recruitment. The first batch - of about 1,700 men - was recruited in July, and began training in Zagreb on 5 August.⁸¹

This recruitment was initially secret until leaked by JNA security to the Belgrade press at the end of July.⁸² The Croatian authorities then insisted this was merely regular recruitment of police, and of a new ceremonial guard that would be a tourist attraction. In fact, reliable sources now acknowledge that most of the Serbian press allegations about this recruitment were at least partially true, and, as Boljkovac later said, 'in fact we [were making] in the framework of the police, an army'.⁸³

⁷⁹ Interview Josip Boljkovac (Zagreb: 10/10/2009). Boljkovac, pp.276-7. Zlatko Crnec, 'Serbs Should Be Given Back Status of Constituent Nation', *Novi List*, 2/5/2005, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.ex-yupress.com/novi/novolist37.html>.

⁸⁰ Sanja Modrić, 'I Weep For My Hawks', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 4/8/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-164, 24/8/1992.

⁸¹ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.78. Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Predsjednik Franjo Tuđman vodio je Hrvatsku...!'

⁸² Aleksandar Vasiljević, "Štit" - *Akcija vojne bezbednosti* (Belgrade: IGAM, 2012), p.22.

⁸³ Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Predsjednik Franjo Tuđman vodio je Hrvatsku...!'

This and subsequent recruitment was not actually conducted by police SUPs, but by local HDZ boards themselves, which organised the sending of their members – young Croatian nationalists and radicals - on the training course.⁸⁴ A disproportionate number of these recruits came from predominantly Serbian regions. For example, 50 of the first batch came from the Croat village of Kijevo in Knin municipality, a village of just 1,261 people – less than 0.03% of Croatia's population providing 2.5% of its first recruits.⁸⁵ Extremists from Hercegovina and abroad, and even some criminals recently amnestied from jail, were also included, while recent research by Cody McClain Brown indicates that the early volunteers on the Croatian side tended to come from pro-Ustaša and NDH-connected familial backgrounds, who were previously excluded from such sensitive positions.⁸⁶ They were, of course, overwhelmingly Croats, and there were rumours in Knin that candidates had been rejected for not having 'pure Croat blood'.⁸⁷ There were also soon allegations of them singing Ustaša-style songs.⁸⁸ These recruits were given brief military-type training, lasting just one or two months,⁸⁹ and then formed into new special units or sent back to their home areas. This was partly orientated towards changing the ethnic structure of police stations, which took place

⁸⁴ Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Odabir mladih Hrvata za tečaj...'. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević. BBC-DOY: Aleksandar Vasiljević, pp.21-2. See also: Cody McClain Brown, 'Who Fights First: Grievances, Community and Collective Action', *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (2013), pp.7-28. Marija Kreš (ed), *Policija u Domovinskom Ratu 1990.-1991.*, Ministarstvo Unutarnjih Poslova RH (Zagreb), accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.mup.hr/UserDocsImages/Glasilo%20MUP/2010/prilog_42.pdf, pp.6-7. Jasna Babić, 'Everyone His Own Sheriff', *Danas*, 23/10/1990, pp.28-29, in FBIS-EER-90-157, 26/11/1990. Silber & Little, pp.107-8.

⁸⁵ Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Odabir mladih Hrvata...'. Snežana Stamatović, 'Strahovanja i nelagode', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.3. ICTY-Milošević: E-359.1 (Human Rights Watch Report, 1/1991).

⁸⁶ Davor Runtić's *Prvi Hrvatski Redarstvenik* cited in ICTY-Martić: T2596-7. Vasiljević, p.22. Stipe Šušar, 'Osuđeni smo jer mene mrze', *Nacional*, 30/7/2002, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.nacional.hr>. BBC-DOY: Aleksandar Vasiljević, pp.21-2. Marija Kreš, (ed), *Policija u Domovinskom Ratu*, p.10. Mile Babić, Federal Secretariat for National Defence, Security Administration, 27/8/1990 (author's copy). Milan Danjanović, Federal Secretariat for National Defence, Cabinet, 27/9/1990. (author's copy). McClain Brown.

⁸⁷ R.D., 'Garda "čistih" hrvata', *Borba*, 3/8/1990, p.5. Vladimir Krasić, 'Nacionalna garda kao pretnja', *Borba*, 16/8/1990, p.4. Momir Ilić, 'Plebiscit Srba u Hrvatskoj: plodovi nove vlasti', *Intervju*, 31/8/1990, pp.4-7. BBC-DOY: Aleksandar Vasiljević, pp.21-2.

⁸⁸ ICTY-Milošević: E-D334.18e (Croatian Assembly document, 13/11/1990). BBC-DOY: Andrija Rašeta, p.3.

⁸⁹ 'The Truth About the Special Police', *Danas*, 9/10/1990, pp.24-27, in FBIS-EER-90-160, 4/12/1990. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T16123.

throughout the second half of 1990,⁹⁰ and was particularly envisaged for the Krajina region - for example, most of the Kijevans were intended to join the Knin SJS, which would have made the station about a third Croat.⁹¹

While new Croat recruits were being organised and armed, however, Boljkovac and the Croatian MUP began talking about disarming the Serbs. On 15 August Boljkovac claimed that the old regime had favoured Serbs when granting licenses for private firearms, and that this would end: everyone would have to apply for licenses again, or have their arms removed.⁹² Boljkovac was also preparing to partially disarm militia stations within Serb-majority municipalities. Given the tradition of arms-bearing in the Krajina region, this was another red flag to the Serbian bull.⁹³

Preparations for the Serb Rebellion

These activities on the Croatian side caused a reaction among Serbs in Krajina. As was constantly noted, the Ustaše began their campaign in 1941 by requesting that Serbs hand in their arms – before killing them.⁹⁴ The fact that the HDZ was recruiting its own, radical members into new units, in large part from Serbian regions, was predictably seen as threatening.

Serbs responded with the mounting of guard duty in their villages. Already in the first half of 1990, there had been occasional reports of Serbs in Knin and elsewhere holding armed or unarmed guard duty, 'sleeping... with guns in [their] hands' and organising for

⁹⁰ For example: Marija Žužul & Snimio Ivica Lajtner, 'Bili smo prvi kad je trebalo', accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.uumup-vbdr.hr/files/Mir_ugled_povjerenje.pdf, p.87. Petar Bašić & Ivica Miškulin, 'Grubišnopoljska Kronika 1990.-1991. (I. dio)', *Scrinia Slavonica*, Vol.7, No.1 (September 2007), pp.364-6. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Djuro Matovina, T11007-8. ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula.

⁹¹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T14002. 'Knin Commune Head Says Croat Police Not Welcome', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 1/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-171, 4/9/1990.

⁹² Gordana Gojak, 'Atmosfera sve napetija', *Borba*, 16/8/1990, p.3.

⁹³ Described in: Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp.6-7.

⁹⁴ Julijana Mojsilović, 'Was Yugoslavia on the brink of civil war?', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 25/8/1990, pp.1-2. Heni Erceg, *Ispodvijesti o ratu u Hrvatskoj* (Split: Feral Tribune, 1995), p.22.

'self-defence'.⁹⁵ In the summer of 1990, SDS leaders often spoke of their movement as an 'uprising of the Serbian people'. Rašković would add that this was an 'unarmed uprising', and that he did not want it to pass the minimal distance required to become an armed uprising.⁹⁶ Others were more radical: Zelenbaba reportedly had a dilemma whether to go to the Sabor at all or take to the forests in rebellion, and in early August claimed that the SDS was already arming and forming a Dinaric Corps (a Chetnik division) to topple the Croatian government, urging Serbs to purchase arms.⁹⁷

I have not found any evidence of organised arming by Krajina Serbs prior to 17 August. Babić did tell the BBC that they had already begun '[organising] activities for gathering weapons for the eventual defence from the Croats', however, suggesting that, for example, they were at least forming lists of those who had arms. Babić also claimed that after the Mlinar incident he had already appointed people to organise unarmed village guards in Krajina.⁹⁸ In the week before 17 August, with the tension over the referendum escalating, in many Serb villages in Knin and the surrounding region local SDS boards formed village guards to defend against possible attack.⁹⁹ By 16 August, there were reportedly guards throughout the Knin Krajina, unarmed on orders from above, but ready to seize their arms and spring into action when necessary.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ NIOD, *Srebrenica: a 'safe' area* (Netherlands, Hague: NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2002) Volume I: Prologue, The history preceding the conflict: Yugoslavia up till 1991, p.76, accessed 1/11/2011 from: <http://www.srebrenica.nl/Pages/OOR/23/379.bGFuZz1OTA.html>. Chapter 'O Kninskoj Krajini i Tromeđi (1989-1991)' in Ilija T. Radaković, *Besmislena Yu-ratovanja 1991-1995* (Belgrade: Društvo za istinu o antifašističkoj narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945, 2003), online version, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.znaci.net/00001/23.htm>. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.211-2. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.101, 152. Dušan Glavaš, pp.20-2. 'Intervention Only After Violence', *Borba*, 21/3/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-060, 28/3/1990. Ivo Perić, *Hrvatska u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji: kronika važnijih zbivanja* (Zagreb: Dom i Svijet, 2006), p.276.

⁹⁶ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.306. Zoran Daskalović and Milan Čuruvija, 'They Have Proclaimed Autonomy', *Vjesnik*, 26/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-149, 2/8/1990.

⁹⁷ Marinko Čulić, 'Olako uspunjene brzina', *Danas*, 3/7/1990, pp.16-17. Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1993), p.26. Milardović, p.160. ICTY-Tadić: Witness P, T1631. Sanja Modrić, 'Dva ljuta začina', *Borba*, 17/7/1990, p.2.

⁹⁸ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić p.12. Also: Dušan Glavaš, pp.19-20.

⁹⁹ Snežana Stamatović, 'Strahovanja i nelagode', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.3. 'Da razum prevlada', *Borba*, 14/8/1990, p.1. Dragan Barjaktarević, 'Ko potpaljuje vatre u Hrvatskoj: Odgovor Srba in Srbu', *Intervju*, 3/8/1990, p.10-12.

¹⁰⁰ Večeslav Kocijan, 'Krstarenje kroz "srpske štraže"', *Vjesnik*, 16/8/1990, p.2. Gordana Gojak, 'Atmosfera sve napetija', *Borba*, 16/8/1990, p.3. 'Napedti muk iščekivanja', *Borba*, 17/8/1990, p.1. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), p.24. Also: HMDC-DR: *Knjiga 1*, Document 19 (Note of

Elements within the Knin police were also preparing for 'resistance' to potential Croatian efforts to disarm them. Tensions had first appeared over various changes the MUP had begun to implement, including intentions to fortify the Knin SJS with new Croatian recruits and rumours about uniforms bearing the new Croatian emblems, as well as the announced renaming of the *milicija* (militia) to *redarstvo* (orderlies/constabulary), an old Croatian term famously used by the NDH.¹⁰¹ Since July some of the Knin police were falling under the unofficial leadership of inspector Milan Martić, who had initiated a petition against the rumoured changes in the MUP, and was co-operating with Babić – 'preparing together for defence'.¹⁰² On Martić's orders, the Serb police were illegally taking their long-arms home with them at night, and were constantly watching the reserve arms cache.¹⁰³ As Babić told the BBC, 'We could in no case allow that the Croatian special forces took the weapons from the militia in Serb towns. Those stores were to be kept and safeguarded until we might need those weapons'.¹⁰⁴ Martić's associate and later Krajina DB chief Dušan Orlović also recalls that prior to 17 August, in cooperation with the Knin TO, 'reserve soldiers were transferred and located in war units of police'.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the reserve police unit was expanded with more 'appropriate' people. As Martić later recalled, 'The period till 17 August was a preparatory time for both sides... That was a period of tensions. We were trying to keep our arms and Croatia was trying to take [them] from us by all means.'¹⁰⁶

SJS Benkovac, 19/9/1990), pp.53-5. Mesić, on the other hand, claimed that these guards were armed and stopping traffic: 'Mesić Addresses Gathering', *Tanjug*, 24/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-165, 24/8/1990.

¹⁰¹ This change was never actually implemented, the neutral term *policija* (police) instead being chosen that November, though *redarstvo* entered common parlance. 'We Do Not Want Uniforms Like the Ustasha Ones', *Politika*, 5/7/1990, p.5, in FBIS-EER-90-108, 20/7/1990. Marinko Čulić, 'Redarstvo, izadi', *Danas*, 10/7/1990, p.15. 'Knin bez općinskog SUP', *Borba*, 1/8/1990, p.4. S.S., 'Najava samostalne milicije', *Borba*, 3/8/1990, p.9. V. Đorđević, 'Ne formiramo nikakve garde', *Borba*, 15/8/1990, p.3. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T14002. 'Sve manje optimizma', *Borba*, 11/10/1990, p.1. 'Knin Commune Head Says Croat Police Not Welcome', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 1/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-171, 4/9/1990. Krunoslav Mikulan, *Povijest Policije u Hrvatskoj: Od začetaka do 1941* (Zagreb: Tonimir, 2003), pp.9-10. Miroslav Krmpotić, *Kronologija rata: agresija na Hrvatsku i Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 1989-1998* (Zagreb: Hrvatski informativni centar, 1998), p.25.

¹⁰² BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.12.

¹⁰³ BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, p.4. Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹⁰⁴ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.12.

¹⁰⁵ Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹⁰⁶ BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, p.4.

Fearing Croatian police intervention, on 13 August Babić led an SNV delegation to Belgrade for talks with SFRJ (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, *Socialistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*) President Borisav Jović and federal Interior Minister Petar Gračanin, both Milošević allies. Gračanin later claimed to the BBC that he had advised the SNV delegation to do everything to avoid confrontation, 'and when it is no longer possible then you will have to defend yourself', with patrols and barricades - 'I advised them to put up these barricades'.¹⁰⁷ However, Babić told the BBC that he had been particularly disappointed with Gračanin, as he promised only to appeal to Boljkovac, and in the delegation's report at the time they noted only Jović's stand that the crisis should be solved peacefully. In The Hague Babić, trying to attribute the conflict to Milošević (as discussed later), made use of Gračanin's remarks, but conceded that he could not remember any such advice.¹⁰⁸ As Gračanin's version remains unsupported, it is, I think, unlikely that any comments he made played a significant role in the decision to rebel on 17 August.

Thus, before 17 August, the Croatian side was in the process of forming new Croatian armed units from HDZ activists, and was intending to prevent the referendum and partially disarm the Serbian police in Krajina. The Knin Serbs, meanwhile, were adamant that they would hold their referendum, and were preparing for resistance and rebellion. As Babić told the BBC, 'We were preparing ourselves to carry out the referendum in all possible conditions, even if there would be armed conflicts.'¹⁰⁹ The stage was thus set for the eruption of the 'Balvan Revolution'.

¹⁰⁷ BBC-DOY: Petar Gračanin, p.36.

¹⁰⁸ ICTY-Milošević: E-P352.1a (Minutes of SNV, 16/8/1990); Witness Milan Babić, T12917.

¹⁰⁹ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.15.

3.4. 17 August 1990: The 'Balvan Revolution'

The direct trigger for unrest on 16-17 August was a decision of the Croatian MUP to remove the arms of the reserve police from police stations in SDS-controlled municipalities in North Dalmatia and Lika. Boljkovac relayed this decision to regional police chiefs at a meeting in Zagreb on 16 August, characterising the municipalities concerned as an area of 'possible rebellion' (it was also said that the arms were needed for the new recruits).¹¹⁰ The MUP knew that any removal of arms would cause alarm among local Serbs and trigger mass gatherings, as had occurred on 5 July, when thousands of Serbs in Knin had rallied to 'defend' the local police during a visit of the MUP leadership. It would therefore have to be conducted secretly, and at night. Not only were municipal organs not informed, but only a select few policemen in each station.¹¹¹ Although arguably justified by the circumstances, this naturally made the whole action highly suspicious for Serbs, and liberal Croats.¹¹²

Around midnight on 16/17 August, militiamen from SUP Zadar came to Benkovac and removed the reserve arms (70 automatic rifles) from the station to Zadar, reportedly surprising the three men on duty.¹¹³ Locals heard about what was happening and alarm was spread throughout the municipality, with many Serbs angrily gathering in front of the police station. In Donji Lapac and Gračac, too, the weapons were taken during the night, prompting angry gatherings.¹¹⁴ At some point on the 17th, local Serbs stormed into the Gračac police station, though to no effect as the arms were already gone.¹¹⁵ In

¹¹⁰ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.78. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli, sredili bi barikade čim su krenule!', *ŠibenikIn*, 17/8/2013, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.Šibenik.in/Šibenik/nikola-vukosic-da-smo-smjeli-sredili-bi-barikade-cim-su-krenule/12977.html>. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T16131.

¹¹¹ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...!'

¹¹² For example: Ivo Goldstein, 'What People Are Keeping Quiet About', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, p.25, in FBIS-EER-90-134, 27/9/1990.

¹¹³ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.78. Zvonko Tarle, 'Niko više ne spava', *Borba*, 18-19/8/1990, p.11. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Aco Drača. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...!'

¹¹⁴ Davor Marijan, 'Djelvoanje JNA i Pobunjenih Srba u Lici 1990. - 1992. Godine'. *Review of Senj*, No. 33 (December 2006), p.219. ICTY-Martić: Witness Ratko Ličina.

¹¹⁵ 'Ministry Report on Disturbances', Tanjug, 17/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1990. Interview Ratko Ličina (Belgrade: 2007).

Obrovac, meanwhile, there had also been gatherings in the early hours, preventing the removal of the weapons by the unit that had arrived to do this.¹¹⁶ Later that day, following a decision of the municipal leadership, those arms were distributed by the Serbs.¹¹⁷ Finally, in Knin several attempts by its police chief to remove its arms to Šibenik had to be cancelled, as locals had gathered outside the station having heard about events elsewhere.¹¹⁸ At about 3pm Serbs then took and distributed those arms themselves.

The second part of the operation that day was the sending of Croatian special forces in armoured personnel carriers (APCs) towards the Knin Krajina. Numerous sources confirm that forces set off from Zagreb towards Korenica, via Karlovac.¹¹⁹ According to Silber and Little, however, there was actually a three-pronged advance (from Zadar, Šibenik and Karlovac), utilising seven of the MUP's ten APCs.¹²⁰ Knin rebel organiser Dušan Orlović makes a similar claim, while then Prime Minister Mesić refers to using 'police from Šibenik and Split'.¹²¹ This advance was, however, suspended by midday, as Serb crowds gathered in Korenica (and perhaps elsewhere), blocking the APCs.¹²²

The third component to the Croatian operation was the sending of three helicopters of about thirty new recruits to Knin, which seems to have happened around lunchtime, after the movement of APCs was suspended.¹²³ On the grounds that they had given false

¹¹⁶ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.78. Milan Četnik, 'State Terrorism in Croatia', *Politika*, 18/8/1990, pp.1, 5-6, in FBIS-EEU-90-163, 22/8/1990.

¹¹⁷ Ivica Marijačić, 'Prepodavali oružje', *Vjesnik*, 11/9/1990, p.12. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.160. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – Regional Files – Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2, Part III: Kordun and Lika and Dalmatia', 1/3/2001, Annex 580 (Report of SJS Obrovac, 18/8/1990), p.425.

¹¹⁸ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096, Knin police chief, 1990. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...!'

¹¹⁹ Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, pp.78-9. BBC-DOY: Stipe Mesić, p.4; Milan Babić, pp.12, 14. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.152. ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Ratko Ličina, MM-096.

¹²⁰ Silber and Little, pp.100-1. Eight of these were recent acquisitions from Slovenia. Davor Runtić, 'Prije Dvadeset Godina – Predsjednik Franjo Tuđman vodio je Hrvatsku...!'

¹²¹ Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009). BBC-DOY: Stipe Mesić, pp.2-4; Franjo Tuđman, pp.1-2. Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21.

¹²² Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.152. ICTY-Martić: Witness Ratko Ličina. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.12, 14.

¹²³ BBC-DOY: Perica Jurić, pp.5-6. BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, pp.1-2.

flight co-ordinates, the JNA ordered these helicopters to divert and land, warning that they would otherwise be forced to do so or shot down, and the Croats complied. This element of the day's events was revealed in the evening.

Serbian Actions

Reports of disarming the police in Benkovac and the attempt in Obrovac aroused the Krajina public, with crowds gathering outside police stations and municipal buildings, to prevent arms being taken or condemn those that allowed the removals. These crowds were reportedly large, several thousand in each town,¹²⁴ and throughout the day angrily shouted for the return of arms, denounced treason, chanted 'We will kill Tuđman', and commented that this was like 1941.¹²⁵ It was rumoured that the Croatian specials had conducted this disarmament in Benkovac and the attempt in Obrovac, though it actually seems to have been done by regular police from the region.¹²⁶

Blockading of roads, initially by crowds of people, seems to have begun early on, but only became more significant in the evening. For example, reportedly in the early morning when large crowds gathered in Benkovac, 'All the approaches to Benkovac were blocked', while in Obrovac sirens, church bells, warning shots and even dynamite had been used to rouse the population to defence in the early hours.¹²⁷ Later, around midday, the president of Obrovac – a Rašković ally who had initiated a meeting with Sabor president Domljan a week earlier - sent a panicked telegram to Babić and the JNA Knin Corps, claiming that Croatian APCs had passed over the nearby Velebit mountain and were now about to enter Obrovac. He said that they had raised barricades to stop

¹²⁴ 'Grubi nasrtaj na Hrvatsku', *Vjesnik*, 18/8/1990, p.1. Milan Četnik, 'State Terrorism in Croatia', *Politika*, 18/8/1990, pp.1, 5-6, in FBIS-EEU-90-163, 22/8/1990. Zvonko Tarle, 'Niko više ne spava', *Borba*, 18-19/8/1990, p.11.

¹²⁵ 'Grubi nasrtaj na Hrvatsku', *Vjesnik*, 18/8/1990, p.1. 'Jovan Rašković Benkovac 1990', *YouTube*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhkaQdzhm8s>. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096.

¹²⁶ Zvonko Tarle, 'Niko više ne spava', *Borba*, 18-19/8/1990, p.11. 'Grubi nasrtaj na Hrvatsku', *Vjesnik*, 18/8/1990, p.1.

¹²⁷ Milan Četnik, 'State Terrorism in Croatia', *Politika*, 18/8/1990, pp.1, 5-6, in FBIS-EEU-90-163, 22/8/1990. 'Ministry Report on Disturbances', *Tanjug*, 17/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1990.

them, and appealed to the Knin corps to intervene to prevent bloodshed.¹²⁸ It was most likely around then that the police arms in Obrovac were also distributed. Babić then ordered the head of the TO in Knin to mobilise for defence. This order was refused, however, as Babić lacked the constitutional authority to give it.¹²⁹

Alarm in Obrovac seems to have corresponded with the time when Croatian APCs were indeed on the move, though it is unclear if any were nearby, and their advance was soon suspended. The news from Obrovac further unnerved people in Knin, however, with crowds again gathering outside the station to prevent the arms being taken. Next, false reports spread that Croatian APCs had passed through Lika and were on their way to Knin. Receiving this information from one of his organisers, Dušan Orlović, that afternoon, Babić ordered the raising of barricades to prevent their entry – over the objections of Rašković, who suggested that they instead lie down in front of the police vehicles. Sirens were sounded and a state of emergency declared. Babić also ordered Martić, using the cover of a crowd storming the police station, to take the reserve arms (about 100 rifles and 80 pistols) and mobilise the reserve police. A little later Babić upgraded the emergency to a 'state of war'.¹³⁰ Orlović spread Babić's word to block roadways: 'I ordered directors of work organisations who had machines, who worked in fields, with trucks, etcetera; people who had private transport companies who had trucks and lorries, and they all got involved, got together.'¹³¹

¹²⁸ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.11. 'Barikade na prilazima Kninu', *Borba*, 18-19/8/1990, p.1.

¹²⁹ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Dragišić, commander of Knin TO, 1990-91, T8589-90. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹³⁰ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.11-14; Milan Martić, pp.5-6. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.152. Jelena Lovrić, 'Jovan Rašković: To se ne može zaustaviti', *Danas*, 21/8/1990, p.8. Interviews: Dušan Orlović; Marko Dobrijević, Organisational Secretary of the SDS, 1990-91; Branko Perić, SDS VP and Assistant Commander of SDS War HQ, 1990; Lazar Macura. Knin VP, 1990-93 (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Lazar Macura, T8157-9; Milan Dragišić, head of Knin Territorial Defence, 1990-91; MM-096, Knin police chief, 1990; E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 12/1990). Mirko Ćuruvija, 'Oružje jos nije vraćeno', *Vjesnik*, 13/9/1990, p.3. Božidar Zečević, *The uprooting: a dossier of the Croatian genocide policy against the Serbs* (Belgrade: Velauto International, 1992), p.131.

¹³¹ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

With everything reported on Radio Knin, word spread throughout the region quickly, and soon everyone was raising barricades. It was thus from the afternoon onwards that the 'Balvan Revolution' proper really took place.

Croatian Intentions

What had the Croatian government's intentions been on that day? Croatian sources have usually presented the events of 17 August as orchestrated by the Serb side, with some alleging JNA plans for a coup. Boljkovac, for example, told the BBC that the helicopters were sent as a 'test' to the JNA to expose its plans.¹³² He failed to explain how providing a good pretext for a coup could possibly prevent that coup, however.

It is clear that the reserve arms were to be removed to prevent the Serbs possibly ever taking them. The MUP wanted to enforce its control of Knin by reinforcing the station there with additional Croat recruits, and Mesić confirms the thinking at the time was to physically prevent the SDS referendum.¹³³ In this context, then, the removal of arms may have been a precursor to Croatian police operations in the region.

However, although Serbian sources talk of the Croatian operation as planned and prepared in advance,¹³⁴ Croatian sources all describe the sending of APCs and helicopters as intended to restore disturbed law and order, with decisions taken only as events unfolded. Boljkovac has recalled more recently that he informed Tuđman about the rebellion that was underway, and Tuđman ordered him to use special forces to remove the barricades and free traffic.¹³⁵ Tuđman, similarly, recalled that he was informed that Martić had taken power in Knin, and therefore ordered action by special forces. When they could not gain access via roads, then they tried by helicopter.¹³⁶ The

¹³² BBC-DOY: Josip Boljkovac, pp.6-9. And: BBC-DOY: Perica Jurić, p.6.

¹³³ BBC-DOY: Stipe Mesić, pp.4-5.

¹³⁴ BBC-DOY: Andrija Rašeta, p.2; Petar Gračanin, p.31; Milan Babić, pp.9-10; Milan Martić, pp.4-5. Interview

¹³⁵ Boljkovac, pp.204-5. Danko Plevnik, 'VRDOLJAK JE ZAHTIJEVAO: Osvojite Knin s 2000 policajaca iz Splita', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 28/11/2009.

¹³⁶ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, pp.1-2. Mesić put the sequence the other way around: BBC-DOY: Stipe

goals of the specials were to include removing barricades, replacing rebel police officers, and arresting Babić and Martić.¹³⁷

It thus seems that although Zagreb was considering, and perhaps preparing, action to assert its authority in Knin and prevent the referendum, and the disarmament served as a precursor to such action, this was not planned for 17 August, and the sending of forces towards Knin on that day was prompted by the beginning of unrest there. However, the most significant parts of the Serbian rebellion – the seizing of arms in Knin and Babić's orders to raise barricades, which resonated throughout the Krajina - actually only got underway *after* the APCs and helicopters had been sent (the former helping precipitate them).¹³⁸ Zagreb thus reacted to the early signs of rebellion and the blocking of disarmament in Obrovac and Knin, ordering police action which ended up precipitating a much wider uprising.

On 17 August, the Croatian leadership - Tuđman and Mesić - also had contact with Rašković through the mediation of Ivan Zvonimir Čičak, president of the Croatian Peasant Party. That morning Tuđman and Mesić asked Čičak to contact Rašković, and he went to meet him at his home in Primošten. On their request, he asked Rašković to call off the referendum. According to Čičak, Rašković – probably already alarmed at the way events were developing – consented, agreeing to go on television later that day with Čičak and appeal to Serbs not to hold the referendum. Čičak returned to Tuđman, and that afternoon called Rašković again to implement the agreement. Now, however, Rašković responded ‘you must be crazy, man, they sent police!’¹³⁹

Mesić, p.4. Also: Nobile, p.54. Viro, p.129.

¹³⁷ BBC-DOY: Perić Jurić, p.5; Stipe Mesić, pp.3-4. Silber and Little, p.104. Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, p.99. Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21.

¹³⁸ Šibenik police chief Nikola Vukošić explicitly notes this sequencing: Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...!'

¹³⁹ Interview Ivan Zvonimir Čičak (Zagreb: 7/10/2009). Supported by: Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.152. 'Samo kulturna autonomija', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.1. Tea Božuš, 'Tolerancijom i povjerenjem o rješenja sadašnje krize', *Borba*, 22/8/1990, p.1. Jelena Lovrić, 'Jovan Rašković: To se ne može zaustaviti', *Danas*, 21/8/1990, p.8.

Thus progressively, over the course of the first half of the day, actions of the Croatian MUP contributed to the deterioration of the situation. This was until the operations of the APCs were suspended and the helicopters grounded, and, at the end of the day, at a meeting of the state leadership Tuđman suggested for the first time that they not to try to prevent the referendum by force, but just ignore it.¹⁴⁰ Čičak argues that Tuđman and the Croatian leadership deliberately engineered this conflict, to start war.¹⁴¹ Most evidence tends to contradict this, however. Most of the Croatian leadership was actually on holiday at the coast at the time, and Tuđman was apparently shocked by these developments.¹⁴² Zagreb had embarked on a risky strategy of confronting and preventing the Serbian referendum and Serbian rebellion, which back-fired and ended up triggering rebellion.

'Spontaneous Self-Organising of the People?'¹⁴³

Knin and SDS leaders at the time spoke of the 'Balvan Revolution' as a spontaneous rising of the Serbian people in self-defence, and tended to deny their own involvement in these events.¹⁴⁴ Most scholars are closer to the Croatian view that the events of 17 August were orchestrated and pre-planned by the Serbian side.¹⁴⁵ However, although, preparations were being laid for armed resistance/rebellion, the available evidence points to these events unfolding gradually during the day, in reaction to moves by the Croatian MUP. There was also a strong spontaneous, unorganised element to the day's events, with, for example, large crowds gathering and some barricades being raised before Babić's decision on mobilisation.

¹⁴⁰ BBC-DOY: Stipe Mesić, p.4.

¹⁴¹ Interview Ivan Zvonimir Čičak (Zagreb: 7/10/2009).

¹⁴² Davorin Rudolf, *Rat koji nismo htjeli: Hrvatska 1991* (Zagreb: Globus, 1999), p.66.

¹⁴³ 'Oružje ostaje u Kninu', *Borba*, 10/9/1990, p.1.

¹⁴⁴ For example: 'Jedni drugima na nišanu', *Borba*, 23/8/1990, p.3. 'Oružje ostaje u Kninu', *Borba*, 10/9/1990, p.1. Ivan Radovanović, 'Pioni padaju najbrže', *Borba*, 1-2/9/1990, p.3. Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 19 (Session of Knin IV, 18/8/1990), pp.56-8.

¹⁴⁵ For example: Gagnon, p.94. Lukić, p.54. Cigar, p.60. Bennett, p.130. Meier, pp.154-5.

Rumours and misinformation did play a role in the uprising. For example, there were rumours in Knin on 17 August of an assassination plot against Opačić, while Belgrade TV falsely reported that morning that there were clashes and even deaths in Glina in Banija.¹⁴⁶ The news that Croatian forces were about to enter Knin that afternoon was also false. SDS officials were clearly complicit in the spread of unverified information and rumours which suited their viewpoints, and Babić deliberately waited several hours after learning that Croatian police were not, in fact, approaching Knin before issuing a denial, in order to allow the first information to have effect and for Serbs to mobilise.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, however, Zagreb was taking very real measures to impose its control on the region – the removals of arms, movements of special forces, and intention to repress the referendum were not misinformation.

Essentially, the Knin leadership was given the trigger to mobilise in rebellion to block such actions from Zagreb, either then or in the future. Although preparations for resistance were being laid, the decision(s) to rebel appears to have been taken on the day, and the uprising unfurled in a fairly disorganised and partly spontaneous manner. As Orlović recalls, Babić 'gave the order and after that everything happened spontaneously' and 'there was a big mess, no organisation behind it. All the government institutions were trying to convince people to organise themselves, not to do that chaotically, but the raising of barricades wasn't organised, it was complete chaos.' Local officials recall that barricades were all over the place, raised between Serb villages as well as on the outskirts - 'Everyone made a barricade towards everyone' - severely hampering transport and communication.¹⁴⁸ Even for SDS leaders themselves, journeys took several times longer than usual, as they constantly had to stop and identify

¹⁴⁶ Zvonko Tarle, 'Niko više ne spava', *Borba*, 18-19/8/1990, p.11. Jelena Lovrić, 'Jovan Rašković: To se ne može zaustaviti', *Danas*, 21/8/1990, p.8. Dušan Pilić, 'L' esercito federale interviene in Croazia', *La Repubblica*, 18/8/1990.

¹⁴⁷ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.14.

¹⁴⁸ Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009). And: Interviews: Branko Perić, SDS VP and Assistant Commander of SDS War HQ, 1990; Lazar Macura, Knin VP, 1990-93; Dušan Vjestica, secretary of the SNV, 1990-91; Ratko Ličina (Belgrade: 2007). ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Lazar Macura, T8157-9; Milan Dragišić, head of Knin Territorial Defence, 1990-91; MM-096, Knin police chief, 1990; E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 12/1990). I.R., 'Ranjena dva milicionara', *Borba*, 4/10/1990, p.2.

themselves.¹⁴⁹ Villagers would often raise barricades in fear, out of control from above - 'one day someone says 100,000 Ustaše are coming and people raise barricades there'.¹⁵⁰

Efforts to impose organisation on this chaotic situation began the next day, on 18 August. At a meeting chaired by Rašković in the village of Pađene, Knin, the SDS leadership elected a party 'War Staff', which was to be based in Golubić, Knin, and organise the barricades. The following day Babić visited this group and assigned their tasks. Members included SDS VP Branko Perić, named 'Assistant Commander for Logistics', Opačić, in charge of propaganda, and Zelenbaba, in charge of medicine (the latter two had only minor roles).¹⁵¹ The Staff attempted to impose some organisation on the barricades and village guards, organising shifts and forming lists of people who had arms.¹⁵² As Rašković later recalled, 'we introduced into all this elements of order and some kind of control so that there would not be conflict.'¹⁵³

The confused manner in which this organisation was subsequently attempted further evidences that the 'Balvan Revolution' was not directed in advance. After 17 August, Babić disappeared from Knin for several days, not informing even municipal officials where he was (he was in hiding, in fear of the Croatian police).¹⁵⁴ In his absence Knin Vice-President Macura took charge, and, as he recalls, was in charge of the barricades

¹⁴⁹ Interview Dušan Vjestica, secretary of the SNV, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 9/11/2007). I. Radovanović, 'Proglašena autonomija!', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.1. Stefan Grubač, 'Nećemo da budemo naivni', *NIN*, 5/10/1990, pp.10-13.

¹⁵⁰ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). Also: Momir Ilić, 'Plebiscit Srba u Hrvatskoj: plodovi nove vlasti', *Intervju*, No.241, 31/8/1990, pp.4-7. Julijana Mojsilović, 'Was Yugoslavia on the brink of civil war?', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 25/8/1990, pp.1-2.

¹⁵¹ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.14-15. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T14001-3. 'Ničega nije ni bilo', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.2. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043, SDS and SNO activist. ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 12/1990); Witness MM-003, Martić associate, 1990-95. Interviews: Dušan Orlović; Branko Perić; Veljko Popović (Belgrade: 2007, 2009).

¹⁵² Interview Branko Perić, SDS VP and Assistant Commander of SDS War HQ, 1990 (Belgrade: 5/11/2007).

¹⁵³ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.130.

¹⁵⁴ ICTY-Martić: Witness Lazar Macura, T8159-60. Interviews: Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007); Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.20 (Babić Interview), p.11. Zvonko Tarle, I. Radovanović & Snježana Stamatović, 'Potpredsednik "pretekao" helikoptere', *Borba*, 21/8/1990, p.3. 'Jedni drugima na nišanu', *Borba*, 23/8/1990, p.3. 'Babić ideolog pobune, Martić samo marioneta', *Novi List*, 20/11/2003, accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.veritas.org.rs/wp-content/bilteni/Bilten_62.pdf.

for several days, working non-stop. In the meantime, the SDS leadership had formed its Staff. But when Perić arrived in Golubić he was surprised to see Martić and other 'communists' there, as they had not been allocated positions at the meeting. Martić subsequently assumed the main role, and after a few days Babić called Macura to tell him that he was dismissed and Martić was taking over.¹⁵⁵

Martić was the de facto commander of the reserve police unit and the most important rebel organiser. He had initially a hundred men, and probably a few hundred later in the year. His police fanned out across the municipality to cover all the territory, and after a few days he made sure that there was a policeman at each barricade.¹⁵⁶ He and his associates, such as Orlović, also worked on issues such as setting up a unified network of communications and a system of alerting. According to JNA intelligence reports, they succeeded in doing this, and by the start of 1991 there were communications, a unified system of reporting, and groups organising the barricades and ready to mobilise, with Martić and others having lists of those with arms.¹⁵⁷

However, organisation was never fully imposed on the barricades and guards, and the situation varied between municipalities: the SDS Staff operated for Knin, as it seems did Martić's police, although contacts existed and were apparently developed on a regional basis, centred on Knin. Around late August Babić and Martić formed a secretive 'Council of National Resistance' (*Savjet narodnog otpora*, SNO), but this seems to have operated more as a loose co-ordinating body of those involved in the rebellion, primarily those in Knin itself, and as a means of issuing anonymous statements to the public, than as a cohesive, centralised organisation.¹⁵⁸ Barricades also were not permanently present, and Croatian officials themselves continued to visit the region. For

¹⁵⁵ ICTY-Martić: Witness Lazar Macura. Interviews: Lazar Macura; Branko Perić (Belgrade: 11/2007). 'Pravo bez oružja', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003, Martić associate, 1990-95.

¹⁵⁷ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.216-9. ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 12/1990). Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹⁵⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: DST-043, SDS and SNO activist. Interview Ratko Ličina (Belgrade: 2007). ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). S.I.B., 'Ni u šumu, ni na drum', *Borba*, 3/10/1990, p.4. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...!'

example, on 18 August Šibenik SUP secretary Ante Bujas and a number of other Šibenik militiamen were in the Knin station again, armed and in uniform, while in early September Defence Minister Špegelj secretly visited the region to scout his plan of attack. On 18 August a secret 100-man Croat police unit was even formed in Knin, and armed over the following days.¹⁵⁹

It is also important to note that one reason why SDS leaders attempted to establish organisation after 17 August was, as Rašković recalled, to avoid conflict.¹⁶⁰ Although regularly guilty of spreading alarmist reports and misinformation, at the time the dominant factions in the SDS did still want to avoid unnecessary clashes and deaths. At the Pađene meeting Rašković declared that they should resist only if forced, only react if attacked and not cause conflict. He proposed Perić for the 'War Staff' on the grounds that as an elderly man, he would be calmer and not favour the use of arms.¹⁶¹ Babić's deputy Macura was also trying to prevent armed clashes from breaking out, instructing guards only to fire if fired upon, while Martić reportedly posted police to each barricade in part to prevent thefts, drunken behaviour and other incidents.¹⁶²

Silber and Little describe Rašković's opposition to raising barricades on 17 August, and his pacifist inclinations have been fairly widely noted in the literature.¹⁶³ However, Rašković also understood what he saw as the desire of the Krajina Serbs for defence from Croatian aggression: 'One cannot send tanks against the people, people who perhaps are armed with a hunting gun or some keepsake weapons from the [Second

¹⁵⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T14002. Interviews: Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009); Veljko Popović, President of Knin Executive Council, 1990 (Belgrade: 8/11/2007). Špegelj, *Sjećanje vojnika*, pp.99-100. 'Babić ideolog pobune, Martić samo marioneta', *Novi List*, 20/11/2003, published in *Veritas Bilten*, no.62., 11/2003, accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.veritas.org.rs/wp-content/bilteni/Bilten_62.pdf. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...'

¹⁶⁰ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.130.

¹⁶¹ Interview Branko Perić, SDS VP and Assistant Commander of SDS War HQ, 1990 (Belgrade: 5/11/2007). Also: 'Samo kulturna autonomija', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.1. Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21.

¹⁶² 'Pravo bez oružja', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.1. 'Kako su "hapšeni" Rašković i Babić', *Borba*, 23/8/1990, p.3. ICTY-Martić: Witness Lazar Macura, T8161-2. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003. Also: 'Tension' as 'Civilian Sentries' on Guard', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 18/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1990.

¹⁶³ Silber & Little, p.102.

World War]... This, in fact, is a declaration of war against a people.¹⁶⁴ He was involved in appointing people to manage the barricades, and does not seem to have tried to impose his pacifistic ideas on others in the SDS, for whom the idea of defence dominated. In spring 1991 he would even publicly call for the Serbs to be armed (as explored in Chapter 5). Rašković's attitude to and role in these developments was thus mixed.

Finally, it is worth noting that the police in the Knin Krajina were not entirely in rebellion at this stage. Although there were clearly elements of open insubordination, most notably from Martić's circle and the Knin reserves, the regular police, including in Knin itself, had not formally separated and was still functioning within the Croatian system. Local police chiefs had all been appointed by Zagreb and still reported to their superiors as normal. People's loyalties were mixed and Croatian services estimated in October that in a conflict they could still count on about half of the local Serbian police.¹⁶⁵ In late November some stations announced their desire to separate, but it was not until January 1991 that a separate Krajina SUP was established, headed by Martić. Even then, the appointment of new police chiefs and cutting of ties with the MUP was a gradual process over the following months.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ 'Rašković To Ask for Federal 'Intervention'', Ljubljana Domestic Service, 18/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1990.

¹⁶⁵ Marijan, 'Djelvoanje JNA i Pobunjenih Srba u Lici', p.221. See: ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043. Erceg, pp.24-8.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example: Snježana Stamatović, 'Narod skuplja pare za miliciju', *Borba*, 9-10/2/1991, p.13. Srđan Španović, 'Čudo u Kijevu', *Danas*, 12/3/1991, pp.18-20. 'Benkovac, Obrovac Police Face Dismissal', *Zagreb Domestic Service*, 15/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-073 16/4/1991. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, pp.104-6. Lučić & Lovrenović, pp.36-7. Krmpotić, pp.32-3.

3.5. Militarisation Entrenched

Croatia and the Knin Rebellion

The eruption of the 'Balvan Revolution' on 17 August 1990 was something of a turning point in the descent into war in Croatia. This was the start of open Serbian rebellion against the authorities in Zagreb, and the beginning of the Knin Krajina's physical separation from Croatia. On both sides, it was after 17 August that the organising and arming of the population really got underway, with both Croatia and the Krajina Serbs seeking and acquiring external sources of arms.

With the eruption of the 'Balvan Revolution', Tuđman decided to abandon the idea of physically preventing the SDS's referendum. Soon, the opinion also prevailed that Zagreb should not attempt to intervene and re-impose its authority in Knin. The main argument for this was that there was a high chance, or certainty, of bloodshed and a wider confrontation in which the JNA would get involved, resulting in an even worse situation for Croatia, which was not yet ready to confront the JNA. Tuđman was also genuinely optimistic that Yugoslavia could be dissolved peacefully in agreement with Serbia, and thus the problems in Croatia settled by talks. He also felt that the 'peaceful' stance best suited Croatia tactically, allowing it to buy time while it armed itself and built international support.¹⁶⁷

This view did not immediately dominate, however, and there were differences of opinion in the Croatian leadership, and different options on the table. On the night of 20-21 August, for example, it seems that Croatian MUP again had plans to re-take Knin by force. Policemen in Drniš, along with some special forces, were gathered and ordered to advance on the barricades with the goal of occupying Knin and arresting Babić and Rašković. They were told to use tear gas and force, while from the direction of Sinj special forces would also advance. The latter did advance, exchanging fire with

¹⁶⁷ See: Bilandžić, pp.369-70. And: footnote 78.

Serb guards,¹⁶⁸ but the Drniš police – the majority of them Serbs, but also some Croats – refused their orders. The station was thereafter disbanded, and the incident was revealed and heavily publicised in Knin afterwards (and though completely denied by the MUP at the time, several Croatian sources now acknowledge it).¹⁶⁹

Ten days later there was another proposal for police intervention to re-assert Zagreb's authority over Knin. With the end of the European Athletics in Split at the beginning of September, 2,000 police in Split for security had to be transferred back to their native stations. Croatian Vice-President Antun Vrdoljak suggested that under the cover of this return, these police sneak into Knin and re-establish Croatian control. As Serb guards were no longer constantly on the roads, it was argued, this would be possible. Tuđman approved the idea and ordered its implementation. Boljkovac and even his hardline deputy Perica Jurić, however, felt that the plan was unrealistic – 'suicidal' - and would likely end in bloodshed and JNA involvement. To Tuđman's anger, they therefore refused to implement it.¹⁷⁰

Shortly afterwards, on 10 September, Tuđman ordered his new Defence Minister, General Martin Špegelj, to come up with a new plan for restoring Croatian authority in Knin. Špegelj discreetly visited Knin to scout it out, and in mid-September proposed

¹⁶⁸ Ante Nazor, 'Chronology of the Homeland War (With the Review of Certain Events 1945.-1990)', *Centar Domovinskog Rata*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://centardomovinskograta.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Domovinski-Rat-Kronologija-eng.pdf>, p.11. ICTY-Martić: Witness Dragan Knezevic. Tea Božuš, 'Pucnji u Civljanima', *Borba*, 22/8/1990, p.1. 'Feljton – Stvaranje hrvatske države i ratni put 113. brigade', 29/10/2010, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/5638-feljton-stvaranje-hrvatske-drave-i-ratni-put-113-brigade.pdf>.

¹⁶⁹ For example: 'Feljton – Stvaranje hrvatske države i ratni put 113. brigade', 29/10/2010, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/5638-feljton-stvaranje-hrvatske-drave-i-ratni-put-113-brigade.pdf>, p.2. Ante Čavka, *Kronoloska Zbivanja u Drinskoj Krajini od Pocetka 1941 do Kraja 1991 Godine* (Split: Grada Za Suvremenu Povijest Drniške Krajine, 1995). Also documented by: 'Kako su "hapšeni" Rašković i Babić', *Borba*, 23/8/1990, p.3. ICTY-Martić: E-899 (Statement of Drniš police officers, 8/1990). ICTY-Martić: Witnesses MM-096; MM-116, Drniš policeman. Jasna Babić, 'Čije je oružje', *Danas*, 18/9/1990, pp.13-15. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 16 (Daily report of JNA 9th Corps, 22/8/1990), pp.48-50.

¹⁷⁰ Boljkovac, pp.206-7. Danko Plevnik, 'VRDOLJAK JE ZAHTIJEVAO: Osvojite Knin s 2000 policajaca iz Splita', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 28/11/2009, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Spektar/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/80962/Default.aspx>.

intervention by police disguised as holiday-goers.¹⁷¹ However, Tuđman ultimately decided to shelve the plan, perhaps in part because of the negotiations that had begun with Knin (discussed later).¹⁷² In early October and November Špegelj drew up another two plans for taking Knin, on Tuđman's instructions. On both occasions, however, they were shelved, with Špegelj now also agreeing that, thanks to a strengthening of the Knin rebels, the plans could not be implemented without bloodshed, and that the danger of JNA intervention made them unwise.¹⁷³ Finally, in December Špegelj drew up a fourth plan, again on Tuđman's request. This time, however, Špegelj proposed operations against the JNA in order to seize their arms. Croatian forces prepared to spring into action, but when the state leadership discussed the proposal, it was resoundingly rejected by all except Mesić and Špegelj: the loss of life predicted was too high, and they would be condemned the world over as violent separatists.¹⁷⁴

Thus, after early September at least, the peaceful option with regard to Knin prevailed in the Croatian leadership, while operations against the JNA were eschewed - but other options were also on the table and under consideration. Some in the leadership were more supportive of such ideas, and Croatian officials repeatedly said that they would, if necessary, re-take Knin and re-establish law and order when the time suited them.¹⁷⁵ The arming on the Croatian side, discussed next, gave real weight to these statements.

To Serbs in Knin, the sense of threat was thus maintained. Although local SDS officials were often responsible for the spread of misinformation on alleged Croatian operations, the idea that Knin could again be 'attacked' as on 17 August, and occupied, was not

¹⁷¹ Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, pp.99-102.

¹⁷² Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, p.101. Boljkovac, p.208.

¹⁷³ Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, pp.103-4, 110-11.

¹⁷⁴ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, p.6. Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, pp.121-4. Boljkovac, pp.210-2. Vasiljević, pp.103-4. Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...'. Ivo Jelić, *Čovjek i rat 90/92* (Split: DES, 2005), Chapter 1, p.22. 'Throwing Bombs, Killing...', *Politika*, 27/1/1991, pp.6-7, in FBIS-EER-91-018, 11/2/1991.

¹⁷⁵ For example: 'Croat Assembly Head: Rebellion 'Will Be Crushed'', *Tanjug*, 6/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-195, 9/10/1990. 'Croatian Presidency Discusses Security Situation', *Zagreb Domestic Service*, 3/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-193, 4/10/1990. Boljkovac, p.255. Ernest Schmiederer, 'Miscarriage Yugoslavia', *Profil* (Vienna), 15/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-201, 17/10/1990. Jelena Lovrić, 'We'll Go To Knin, Too...', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.18-19, in FBIS-EER-91-075, 4/6/1991.

simply paranoia or misinformation – it was something repeatedly talked about in public by the Croatian leadership, and privately considered.

The Arming of the Croatian Side

In autumn and winter 1990 the Croatian authorities undertook a large-scale campaign of arming and organising Croatian armed forces from the HDZ, with a particular focus on the Knin Krajina region. Although partly a reaction to the appearance of an armed rebellion in Knin, this was, to Serbs, alarming, and a spur to their own arming.

Aside from the new police units, there were apparently some HDZ armed groups formed even before the 'Balvan Revolution'.¹⁷⁶ Immediately after 17 August applications for arms permits, for Croats as well as Serbs, shot up, while some Croatian - mainly HDZ - groups began to arm themselves in the municipalities and villages in the Knin region, using arms from police and TO depots. For example, on 17 August itself up to 50 short arms were distributed to Croats in the mixed village of Vrlika, bordering Knin,¹⁷⁷ while in Šibenik the following day half of the reserve police force was activated and 500 automatic rifles and 200 pistols of the reserve police were removed from a JNA hangar and then distributed to Croats, including Croat settlements within Knin, such as Potkonje, a suburb of Knin town, which received 50 rifles.¹⁷⁸ A reserve Croat formation of 100 police was also formed in Knin, and armed in the following

¹⁷⁶ Milorad Bibić Mosor, 'Vitimir Brzović Vito: Moja Šesta je u ratu bila – prva!', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21/6/2009, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.dugirat.com/novosti/arhiva/9523.html>. Beata Huszka, *The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement* (Budapest: Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research, 2009), p.69. Slavica Kleva, 'Osnivač HDZ'a Rijeke držao arsenal oružja', *Glas Istre*, 21/9/2010, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.glasistre.hr/hrvatska/vijest/262909>.

¹⁷⁷ Toni Paštar, 'Otvoreno Ante Tonći Turudić', *Ferata*, 36/5/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.ferata.hr/arhiva teme/2622-otvoreno-ante-toni-turudi>. 'Ante Turudić, Predsjednik Gradskog Vijeće', 2008, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.vrlika.hr/index.php/adresar/item/289-int-ante-turudic-12-200/289-int-ante-turudic-12-200>.

¹⁷⁸ See: 'Feljton – Stvaranje hrvatske države i ratni put 113. brigade', 29/10/2010, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/5638-feljton-stvaranje-hrvatske-drave-i-ratni-put-113-brigade.pdf>. 'Daljni ustroj postrojbi 113. brigade, ustroj policije do osnivanja ZNG-a i prvi veći oružani sukob', 1/1/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/6013-daljini-ustroj-postrojbi-113-brigade-ustroj-policije-do-osnivanja-zng-a-i-prvi-vei-oruani-sukob.pdf>.

days.¹⁷⁹ Croat settlements within many of the affected Serb municipalities had formed guards themselves on 17-18 August, armed with whatever weapons they had (hunting rifles and pistols), and soon these were turned into new 'police stations', reinforced by Zagreb with further arms and men.¹⁸⁰

On 18 August the MUP seems to have ordered the activation of 50% of the reserve police throughout Croatia. However, in Osijek at least, it was actually the HDZ that was mobilised, as the existing reserves were mistrusted as disproportionately Serbian.¹⁸¹ Similar things took place in other municipalities, particularly those near the Krajina, with small quantities of arms (hundreds), including hunting rifles, distributed to newly formed HDZ armed groups.¹⁸² Even in completely peaceful places, such as eastern Slavonia, the HDZ was arming itself with arms and explosives.¹⁸³

Shortly after the 'Balvan Revolution' the Croatian leadership began looking for arms to import, and already on 10 September three lorries of arms and munitions arrived from Slovenia.¹⁸⁴ The government began submitting requests to foreign countries, finding their greatest success in Hungary, which offered to sell Zagreb kalashnikovs at a very

¹⁷⁹ Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli, sredili bi barikade čim su krenule!'. And: Špegelj, *Sjećanje Vojnika*, p.100.

¹⁸⁰ See for example: Goran Miletić, 'Zločin u Lovincu, Izvještaj sa praćenje suđenje', *Centar za Mir, Nenasilje i Ljudska Prava*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.centar-za-mir.hr/>. Božo Mihaljević, 'Ratni put JNP Lovinac', *Hazud*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hazud.hr/ratni-put-jnp-lovinac/>. 'Daljni ustroj postrojbi 113. brigade, ustroj policije do osnivanja ZNG-a i prvi veći oružani sukob', 1/1/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/6013-daljnj-ustroj-postrojbi-113-brigade-ustroj-policije-do-osnivanja-zng-a-i-prvi-vei-oruani-sukob.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ Branimir Glavaš, 'Iskaz Branimira Glavaša', 9/7/2006, retrieved 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.branimirglavas.com>, p.2. 'Daljni ustroj postrojbi 113. brigade, ustroj policije do osnivanja ZNG-a i prvi veći oružani sukob', 1/1/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/6013-daljnj-ustroj-postrojbi-113-brigade-ustroj-policije-do-osnivanja-zng-a-i-prvi-vei-oruani-sukob.pdf>. Jelić. 'Odlučni u odbranu suvereniteta Republike Hrvatske', *Vinkovački List*, 24/8/1990, p.1.

¹⁸² ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T16130-3. ICTY-Martić: Witness Borislav Đukić, T6698-9; E-1005 (Open letter of the Zadar SUP, 5/11/1990). Vladimir Krasić, 'Arsenali za priručnu upotreba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.2.

¹⁸³ Drago Hedl, 'Danube Carries Something', *Feral Tribune* (Split), 5/12/2002, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.ex-yupress.com>. Interview Miloš Vasić, *Vreme* journalist (Belgrade: 12/7/2007).

¹⁸⁴ Šaša Leković, 'Neispravne puške za odbranu Hrvatsku', *E-Novine*, 18/10/2011.

low price. A deal was agreed on 5 October, and shipments of thousands of kalashnikovs, along with some other arms, began a few days later.¹⁸⁵

The precise number of arms imported remains somewhat unclear. Špegelj, who negotiated the deal with Hungary, has always claimed to have imported more than 30,000 automatic rifles, and the vast majority of other sources also repeat this number, including Špegelj's later critics and opponents.¹⁸⁶ At the time, some reports suggested a far higher number of about 80,000, but this was a consequence of deliberate exaggerations by Špegelj and his team, intended to intimidate the JNA, and probably also the JNA's desire to discredit the Croats as much as possible.¹⁸⁷ However, some sources also suggest that the quantity of arms was lower, as only some of the agreed arms were actually delivered. JNA security chief Aleksandar Vasiljević has spoken of 18,000 kalashnikovs, while other information suggests that only ten of the thirty thousand agreed were actually delivered.¹⁸⁸

These arms were distributed throughout Croatia, particularly to Croats within and around the Krajina region.¹⁸⁹ As before, units were formed mainly through the HDZ. As the HDZ rightist Branimir Glavaš has acknowledged, a 'paramilitary party militia' was created which, legally, had the status of a 'paramilitary formation'.¹⁹⁰ According to Špegelj, Tuđman insisted that everything be done through the HDZ, mistrusting the

¹⁸⁵ Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, pp.104-5, 111-2.

¹⁸⁶ Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, p.136. Branimir Glavaš, 'Iskaz Branimira Glavaša', 9/7/2006, retrieved 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.branimirglavas.com>, p.5. Ivo Jelić, *Čovket i rat 90/92* (Split: DES, 2005).

¹⁸⁷ Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, p.143. Ante Nazor, 'Istina o naoružanju terorističkih formacija HDZ u Hrvatskoj', *Hrvatski Vojnik*, No. 433 (10/2013), accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hrvatski-vojn timer.hr/hrvatski-vojn timer/4332013/domovinski rat.asp>. Nobile & Letica, pp.17, 27-8. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.229.

¹⁸⁸ Svetislav Spasojević, 'Kadijević zaustavlja akciju "Štit" [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 17/7/1992, p.56. Svetislav Spasojević, 'Špegelj obala brbljivosti [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 7/10/1992, p.56. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, pp.53-4. Also: ICTY-Milošević: Witness Imra Agotić, T23262. 'Stane Brovet: Uvozi se i teško naoružanje', *Borba*, 14/6/1991, p.2.

¹⁸⁹ 'Lovas Case', Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević (Belgrade: 21/6/2010), accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/Transkripti/lovas.html>, p.4. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.216-9. HMDC-DR: *Knjiga 1*, Document 47 (Order of JNA 9th Corps, 5/4/1991), pp.108-9.

¹⁹⁰ Branimir Glavaš, 'Iskaz Branimira Glavaša', 9/7/2006, retrieved 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.branimirglavas.com/>, p.7. Petar Bašić, Petar & Ivica Miškulin, 'Grubišopoljska Kronika 1990.-1991. (I. Dio)', pp.366-7.

existing territorial defence as well as police structures, and wanting to be assured of people's 'loyalty to the party' – or, as Špegelj more negatively frames it: 'He wanted mercenaries who [would] be under his political control'.¹⁹¹ When the JNA exposed this in January 1991, the Croatian MUP then distributed thousands of IDs to these armed HDZ members 'legalising' them as members of the reserve police.¹⁹² As Glavaš notes, however, 'Apart from IDs, 99% of those members had only kalashnikovs. None of those members had any kind of uniform, nor markings of members of the reserve composition of the MUP.'¹⁹³

Moreover, it was generally the extreme wing of the HDZ that was taking up arms, people who not only sought to defend Croatia, but also saw the conflict as an opportunity to rid Croatia of its Serbian minority. Glavaš, for example, was named Secretary of National Defence for Osijek by Špegelj himself, even though he was an extremist who even clashed with Tuđman and Boljkovac.¹⁹⁴ This naturally gave credence to Serb fears of the 'Ustaše'.

After 17 August, Serbs in Knin Krajina also sought and acquired arms. Applications for arms permits rocketed, and by January 1991 at least 1,300 hunting rifles and 400 pistols

¹⁹¹ Codly McClain, 'Who Fights First: Grievances, Community and Collective Action', *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (2013), pp.23-4. Also: BBC-DOY: Aleksandar Vasiljević, p.18.

¹⁹² Branimir Glavaš, 'Iskaz Branimira Glavaša', 9/7/2006, retrieved 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.branimirglavas.com/>, p.3. Also: HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 34 (JNA report, 24/1/1991), p.83. BBC-DOY: Aleksandar Vasiljević, p.25. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević. 'Daljni ustroj postrojbi 113. brigade, ustroj policije do osnivanja ZNG-a i prvi veći oružani sukob', 1/1/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/aktualnosti/aktualnosti/6013-daljnj-ustroj-postrojbi-113-brigade-ustroj-policije-do-osnivanja-zng-a-i-prvi-vei-oruani-sukob.pdf>. 'Throwing Bombs, Killing...', *Politika*, 27/1/1991, pp.6-7, in FBIS-EER-91-018, 11/2/1991.

¹⁹³ Branimir Glavaš, 'Iskaz Branimira Glavaša', 9/7/2006, retrieved 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.branimirglavas.com/>, pp.3, 13.

¹⁹⁴ Momčilović, p.9. Vasiljević, p.104. On Glavaš see: R. Stević, 'Naozi na seobu Srba', *Borba*, 10/9/1990, p.3. Mirić, pp.18, 63-4. Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and its Destroyers* (New York: Times Books, 1999), p.152. See also: Cody McClain Brown, 'Who Fights First: Grievances, Community and Collective Action', *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (2013), pp.7-28.

had been acquired.¹⁹⁵ I believe that the evidence indicates that more significant arming only began in spring 1991, however. This issue is explored in Chapter 5.

The Serbs in Knin Krajina region and elsewhere were aware that members of the HDZ, in many cases their own neighbours, were arming on a significant scale, and this encouraged their own fears and their own arming.¹⁹⁶ The fear of Croatian police intervention, meanwhile, though often fuelled by rumours and misinformation, had a very real basis. The way that arming was conducted illegally, through HDZ channels, was unsettling for Serbs. At the same time, the question could be asked how else the government could have done this. It was to a certain extent inevitable that enthusiastic nationalists of the HDZ, particularly their most extreme members, would be the first to enrol in such units, and it seems that Zagreb did not have full control over this process.¹⁹⁷ The Croatian authorities were not intentionally acting provocatively, and had, for example, decided to refrain from purges of Serbs to 'Croatianise' the police force (though dismissals did still occur).¹⁹⁸ Measures such as the stationing of new Croat recruits did help ensure Zagreb's control of contested areas, and the strengthening of Croatian defence had a very logical rationale.

A genuine security dilemma was in play. The Croatian side had logical reasons for arming – and it was probably a great help to Croatia in the 1991 war – but this, especially the way it was conducted, was extremely alarming to Serbs in Croatia. Serbs had some faith that the JNA and Serbia would protect them, but this was by no means guaranteed at the time (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). They thus also had a rational reason to arm to protect themselves from Croatian incursions and attempts to reassert

¹⁹⁵ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.216-9. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević. Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990).

¹⁹⁶ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.130. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). ICTY-Martić: E-1005 (Open letter of Zadar SUP, 5/11/1990). ICTY-Babić: E-PS-7-2-4 (Babić Interview), p.26. 'Talks Without Agreement', *Danas*, 16/10/1990, pp.22-24 in FBIS-EEU-90-151, 5/11/1990.

¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, Špegelj has argued that the TO structure could and should have been used, while Boljkovac believed that it should have been done through the police. See: Cody McClain Brown, 'Who Fights First: Grievances, Community and Collective Action', *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (2013), pp.23-4. Vasiljević, pp.38, 104.

¹⁹⁸ Boljkovac, pp.186-8. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.104.

Croatian authority – and, indeed, it was partly Serbian arming and organising that enabled the Serbs to carry out their referendum, and discouraged Zagreb from police operations in the region.¹⁹⁹

Moreover, it is notable that Croatian and Serbian organising and arming occurred concurrently, with the Croatian side conducting this on a considerably larger scale at first. The very day, or next days, that Serbs had taken arms in Knin and Obrovac, similar or larger quantities of arms were being distributed to HDZ-based units nearby, including within or next to Knin municipality itself, while new 'special units' were also being formed. This also helps explain and put into context the reluctance of Serbs in Knin to return those arms to the police station, which was a central question in the following month.

¹⁹⁹ As noted by: CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.1*, pp.83-4.

3.6. Negotiations Over the Security Situation

Despite the outbreak of armed rebellion on 17 August, in the following month a number of contacts and negotiations were held, with the declared aim of restoring trust and mutual ties, reducing tension, and improving the security situation. However, little was achieved, and the 'Balvan Revolution' instead became further entrenched. This section will consider why this was the case. This issue is of particular importance because at The Hague, Milan Babić claimed that a Belgrade-connected 'parallel structure' had thwarted his efforts at a peaceful resolution of the crisis, for which Serb extremists in Knin and Belgrade were thus responsible. The available evidence, however, presents a much more mixed picture, with the decisive turning point in entrenching the rebellion coming from renewed actions by the Croatian MUP.

The Aftermath of 17 August

The 'Balvan Revolution' was accompanied by a great escalation of rhetoric on both sides. The Croatian side saw this as confirmation of the Great Serbian 'scenario' to destabilise Croatia, and the work of rabbles and terrorists. Top officials even spoke of banning the SDS, as a 'terrorist organisation'.²⁰⁰ At the same time, Zagreb insisted that most Serbs were 'loyal', and a moderate SDP Serb, Simo Rajić, who gave a speech in Croatian Assembly condemning the SDS and Milošević, was given the Sabor vice-president post which the SDS had declined to fill. As Ivana Durić and Vladimir Zorić observe, however, such divisions between 'good' and 'bad' Serbs (and, alternately, between 'good' and 'bad' Croats) inevitably 'upheld the initial biased attitude against the 'bad them' and further hardened the us–them division'.²⁰¹ For the SDS and many Serbs,

²⁰⁰ Roksanda Ninčić, 'The Dangerous Plebiscite', *Vreme News Digest Agency*, 28/10/1991. Mirjana Tomić, 'Un referéndum en Yugoslavia agudiza la tensión entre serbios y croatas', *El País*, 19/8/1990. Gordana Gojak, 'Krizu riješiti bez nasilja', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.3. Josip Manolić, *Intervjui i javni nastupi 1989-1995* (Zagreb: Politeia, 1995), p.38.

²⁰¹ Ivana Durić & Vladimir Zorić, 'Foreclosing the Other, Building the War: A Comparative Analysis of Croatian and Serbian Press Discourses During the Conflict in Croatia', in Pål Kolstø (ed), *Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts: Representations of Self and Other* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p.69.

meanwhile, Croatia was implementing, as Rašković and Babić put it, 'state terrorism' against the Serbian people in Croatia.²⁰² The passing of the constitutional amendments, the ban on the referendum and the police operations on 17 August, Rašković argued, showed that Ustashism was triumphing, and he now largely abandoned his previous optimism about an agreement.²⁰³

There were, however, still contacts and talks between the conflicting sides – for example, Rašković with Mesić and Tuđman on 17 August, while on 18 August the chief of the Šibenik SUP was in Knin for talks with Babić.²⁰⁴ The Croatian side demanded the return of arms and dismantling of the barricades, initially setting a deadline of 19 August. Babić, however, publicly rejected this, claiming that he did not have the moral right to call on his people to disarm while they faced 'state terrorism'.²⁰⁵

The SDS decided not to participate in an extraordinary Sabor session of 24 August, sending just one representative to present their stance. But they did unanimously approve negotiations with the HDZ, which the latter initiated with a request to Vukčević to present SDS demands for reducing tension. At an SDS-HDZ meeting on 30 August he put forward seven demands, some quite substantial – new elections in Serb regions, recognising the plebiscite as legal – and others more minor – upgrading the Knin police station to a SUP, ceasing calling the SDS leaders 'terrorists' and 'Chetniks', and peaceful life and work for the SDS leaders, including Rašković, who lived in Šibenik. As Vukčević emphasises, however, none of these requests was met.²⁰⁶

²⁰² 'Najveća želja - sprečiti krvopriličje', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.3. 'Rašković To Ask for Federal Intervention', *Ljubljana Domestic Service*, 18/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1990.

²⁰³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.264, 274, 277. V. Vignjević, 'Nećemo kriv', *Borba*, 6/9/1990, p.3.

²⁰⁴ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T14002. Interviews: Dušan Orlović; Veljko Popović, President of Knin Executive Council, 1990 (Belgrade: 2007). Ante Pancirov, 'Nikola Vukošić: Da smo smjeli...'. 'Babić ideolog pobune, Martić samo marioneta', *Novi List*, 20/11/2003, accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.veritas.org.rs/wp-content/bilteni/Bilten_62.pdf.

²⁰⁵ Grandits & Leutloff, p.34.

²⁰⁶ Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007). Vojislav Vukčević, 'Predloge', 30/8/1990 (author's copy). I. R., 'Prestati sa uvredama', *Borba*, 8-9/9/1990, p.10.

While the Croatian authorities sought the return of arms Serbs took from stations, Serb municipalities demanded, among other things, the return of arms the MUP had taken, as well as the withdrawal from the region of special forces (whose presence Zagreb usually denied).²⁰⁷ Despite shootings from Sinj on 20 August and various plans to re-take the region, however, there was some progress in this respect. In the days immediately following 17 August, all the arms Serbs had distributed in Obrovac were returned to the station, while on 19 August SUP Gospić also returned the arms taken from Lapac.²⁰⁸ The MUP did not return the arms taken from Benkovac or Gračac, however, while in Knin the Serbs likewise refused.

Rašković claimed that he favoured the return of the Knin arms, but not 'capitulation' - a one-sided call to return those arms would 'bring into question the entire party'.²⁰⁹ On 24 August he had a meeting with Boljkovac in Zagreb, where he proposed that the Serbs in Knin return arms, and dismantle the barricades, in exchange for Knin becoming a SUP, as had been demanded previously.²¹⁰ This meeting was again controversial as it was initially secret but then published in the press prematurely, Rašković complaining that he had again been framed.²¹¹ Nevertheless, contacts between the MUP and Knin authorities were also taking place, with Knin demanding a SUP, while Babić also met several times with Jerko Vukas, the HDZ President of neighbouring Sinj municipality – the two knew each other privately and Vukas came to Knin on a 'peace mission', with later endorsement from above. They even made some agreements, with Babić appealing to Serbs not to place barricades towards Sinj, and Vukas appealing to the MUP to withdraw militia from the region.²¹²

²⁰⁷ S. S., 'Razgovor Babića i Vukosa', *Borba*, 31/8/1990, p.4

²⁰⁸ Marijan, 'Djelvoanje JNA i Pobunjenih Srba u Lici'. Ivica Marijačić, 'Prepodavali oružje', *Vjesnik*, 11/9/1990, p.12. Miloš Rajković & Kosta Krajinčanić, 'Knin Veterans Predict Ustasha To Take Power', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 23/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-165, 24/8/2990.

²⁰⁹ 'Mali rat kao opereta', *Borba*, 24/8/1990. Momir Ilić, 'Plebiscit Srba u Hrvatskoj: plodovi nove vlasti', *Intervju*, 31/8/1990, pp.4-7.

²¹⁰ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.323-8.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, pp.350-4.

²¹² S. S., 'Razgovor Babića i Vukosa', *Borba*, 31/8/1990, p.4. S. Stamatović, 'Pregovori na Plitvicama?', *Borba*, 5/9/1990, p.3. Čavka.

From early September onwards the peaceful option with regard to Knin prevailed in the Croatian leadership. However, though favouring talks, the ruling HDZ showed little willingness to alter its stances, escalating its rhetoric and, for example, not granting any of Vukčević's demands. In Šibenik a petition against the presence of Rašković and other prominent local SDS leaders was started, orchestrated by the local HDZ authorities, with accompanying pressures and threats against the individuals named, as well as dismissals from work.²¹³ Newly elected Croatian Prime Minister Josip Manolić spoke against the petition, but no action appears to have been taken, and other leading officials seemed to endorse the sentiment behind it, with Mesić saying in October that SDS leaders must 'respect Croatian laws, or they will not be here [in Croatia]'.²¹⁴ Discrimination against Serbs, such as dismissals from work, also escalated with the rebellion.

Meanwhile, the Croatian government was also implementing a progressive 'economic blockade' of the 'rebel' municipalities. Already when the Association was formed there were proposals for this, and complaints from Serb municipalities that they were being cut off.²¹⁵ This escalated after 17 August, when the authorities resolved to stop financing those allegedly participating in the 'scenario' against Croatia.²¹⁶ The main factory in Knin, *Tvik*, for example, was ordered to repay all its debts, threatening it with bankruptcy. It was later saved by a deal with companies in Belgrade, after Babić appealed to Milošević.²¹⁷ Pay for teachers and other municipal employees began to be cut off.²¹⁸ Agreed economic projects were also renounced: on the one hand, hardline

²¹³ 'Traže iseljavanje Raškovića', *Borba*, 23/8/1990, p.3. S. Stamatović, 'Dr Jovan Rašković dobio otkaz', *Borba*, 29/8/1990, p.1. S. Stamatović, 'Izgon', *Borba*, 5/9/1990, p.3. ICTY-Martić: Witness Branko Popović; E-939 (*Politika*, 23/8/1990). 'Serb Leader in Knin Region Indicates Little Hope', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 23/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-165, 24/8/2990. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.331.

²¹⁴ M. Krmpotić, 'Skupovi na sve strane', *Borba*, 8/10/1990, p.3. Manolić, p.39.

²¹⁵ 'Croat Government Meets With Serb Municipalities', *Tanjug*, 10/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-156, 13/8/1990. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.322. Gordana Gojak, 'Razrađen scenarij za rušenje vlasti', *Borba*, 15/8/1990, p.1.

²¹⁶ Gordana Gojak, 'Krizu riješiti bez nasilja', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.3. Interview Veljko Popović, President of Knin Executive Council, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 8/11/2007).

²¹⁷ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.4 (Babić Interview), p.20.

²¹⁸ I. Radovanović, 'Blokada TVIK-a', *Borba*, 24/8/1990, p.3. Momir Ilić, 'Plebiscit Srba u Hrvatskoj: plodovi nove vlasti', *Intervju*, No.241, 31/8/1990, pp.4-7. 'Deblokada pa dijalog', *Borba*, 11/10/1990, p.1. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.128-9.

Serbs around Babić insisted the Croats recognise and talk with the Association; on the other hand, Croat officials said the projects could only go ahead if they left the Association.²¹⁹ As Mesić said at the time, 'while they stand on barricades, it would be stupid of us to give them money for them to buy arms'.²²⁰ This policy produced the opposite of that intended, however, increasing the separation and decreasing the links between the Krajina and Croatia, encouraging the Krajina Serbs to build economic and other links with Serbia, and also punishing municipalities that were more moderately inclined, such as those in Banija-Kordun.²²¹

The HDZ leadership does seem to have been interested in a negotiated solution with the Serbs based on minority rights within Croatia.²²² However, due to its own actions, rhetoric and policies, and the stance of Serb hardliners with no interest or faith in negotiations, opportunities for talks were shrinking. Thus, ordinary Serbs really had no idea what Croatia might offer, only the word of Croatian leaders, which was undermined by actions that seemed threatening and contrary to their promises.

In the SDS, meanwhile, there were differing opinions on how to proceed. Rašković oscillated between pacifist rhetoric and supporting the people's right to defend themselves from 'state terrorism'. He did not advocate 'capitulation', but sought to reach some compromise that would help alleviate tensions.²²³ Opačić and Zelenbaba opposed talks with the Croatian side, and advocated further arming and barricades.²²⁴ Babić was

²¹⁹ 'Sve manje optimizma', *Borba*, 11/10/1990, p.1. BBC-DOY: Slavko Degoricija. Interview Dušan Vjestica, President of Gračac Executive Council, 1990-92 (Belgrade: 9/11/2007). Jelena Lovrić, 'We'll Go To Knin, Too...', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.18-19, in FBIS-EER-91-075, 4/6/1991.

²²⁰ Stela Bogdanić, 'Zašto idem u Beograd', *Borba*, 31/8/1990.

²²¹ Prime Minister Manolić seemed to recognise this in January 1991: Marinko Čulić, 'Everything According to Law', *Danas*, 15/1/1991, pp.18-19, in FBIS-EER-91-027, 4/3/1991.

²²² See, for example: Degoricija, pp.23-30. Tomac, pp.156-71. Nobile, pp.104-5, 220-23. Sarinic, pp.16, 219. Croatian Presidential Transcript, 4/3/1992, accessed 1/8/2014 from:

<http://www.slobodanprajjak.com/MATERIJALI/SVJEDOCI/MiomirZuzul/42.pdf>. Zvonko Lerotic, 'Finska kao putkoaz', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.22-24. Slavko Ćuruvija, 'Lančana samoubojstva', *Borba*, 3-4/11/1990, p.5. 'Odluka o proglašenju Ustavnog zakona...', *Narodne Novine*, No.65, 4/12/91. 'Ustavni zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Ustavnog zakona...', *Narodne Novine*, No.27, 8/5/1992.

²²³ 'Samo kulturna autonomija', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.1. 'Mali rat kao opereta', *Borba*, 24/8/1990, p.8. Momir Ilić, 'Plebiscit Srba u Hrvatskoj: plodovi nove vlasti', *Intervju*, 31/8/1990, pp.4-7.

²²⁴ 'Sedmorica za linč', *Borba*, 22/8/1990, p.3. V. Vignjević, 'Nećemo kriv', *Borba*, 6/9/1990. Momir Ilić, 'Plebiscit Srba u Hrvatskoj: plodovi nove vlasti', *Intervju*, 31/8/1990, pp.4-7. Jelena Lovrić, 'Smjene i

somewhere inbetween. He blocked, for example, talks with a proposed Sabor delegation headed by Mesić, which was to visit the Serb municipalities for talks, yet attended other talks.²²⁵

The 10 September Agreement

On 7 September, following the rejection of the visit of Mesić's commission, the Croatian MUP issued a new ultimatum to Knin: they must return the arms by 11 September, or 'all appropriate legal measures, including criminal and other repressive measures' would be taken.²²⁶ Local SDS and municipal officials strongly rejected this demand.²²⁷ This and the aforementioned contacts led to a meeting in Donji Lapac between a Croatian delegation (MUP chief Boljkovac, Degoricija, Vukas and others) and an SNV delegation led by Babić.

The Lapac talks took place mainly because both sides wished to avoid a direct confrontation. They therefore ended up proclaiming an agreement, even though key issues remained unresolved. As one participant in the talks, an SDS moderate who later became the leader of 'Tuđman's Serbs', has recalled, the talks finished 'without result'.²²⁸ The two sides signed a statement supporting the formation of a Knin SUP, the return of arms in Knin, delaying the deadline for that return, and resolving future issues through dialogue.²²⁹ It was also said that people returning arms would not be prosecuted, and

krizna vremena', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.9-12. Marinko Čulić, 'Slijeganje tla', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.20-21. Milan Jajčinović, 'Barikade u glavama', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.26-27. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13563. I. Radovanović, 'Dve struje', *Borba*, 24/8/1990, p.3. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 16 (Daily Report of JNA 9th Corps, 22/8/1990), p.48, Document 55 (Official Note about connections between Arkan and Milan Babić, 31/5/1991), pp.138-9.

²²⁵ Miroslav Ivić, 'Nema razloga za strah', *Vjesnik*, 10/9/1990, pp.1-2. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Stjepan Mesić, T10523-4. 'We Will See What We Have in Common', *Politika*, 31/3/1991, pp.9-11, in FBIS-EER-91-051, 22/4/1991.

²²⁶ 'Croatia Orders Return of 'Unauthorized' Weapons', *Tanjug*, 7/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-175, 10/9/1990.

²²⁷ Mirko Ćuruvija & Miroslav Ivić, 'Glavna tema oružje', *Vjesnik*, 9/9/1990, p.1. 'Oružje ostaje u Kninu', *Borba*, 10/9/1990, p.1. Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, p.27. M.C., 'Oružje se ne vraća?', *Vjesnik*, 10/9/1990, p.14.

²²⁸ Milan Đukić, *Ugašena ognjišta širom svijetle* (Zagreb: Srpska narodna stranka, 2008), p.49.

²²⁹ ICTY-Martić: E-180 (Lapac Announcement, 10/9/1990).

that the arms would remain in Knin.²³⁰ The Serbs sought that the Knin SUP would cover all the municipalities of their Association, but the MUP rejected this and envisaged only a single separate unit. This fundamental issue was not resolved in the talks, and Babić and Boljkovac openly clashed over it at the subsequent press conference.²³¹ The MUP also only undertook to advocate for the formation of a Knin SUP in the Croatian Sabor, about which the Sabor would decide, while no new deadline was set for the return of the Knin arms.²³² Both moves were presumably to be undertaken simultaneously, but it soon became clear that neither side was willing to move first.

Babić apparently agreed to begin the return of arms, but even at the press conference after the meeting he was calling this into question, promising only to 'appeal' to people 'who really got [arms] illegally' to begin their return, and saying that this return would occur in so much as people had faith in the initiative regarding the SUP.²³³ On Knin Radio the following evening Babić then noted that the Serb people had 'lost trust in the Croatian government and MUP' and that he could 'appeal... for the people to return arms' only when that faith was restored. He also insisted that this required, first, the creation of a Knin SUP and the withdrawal of special forces from the region, and maintained that he was not, in fact, calling for the return of arms yet.²³⁴ On 16 September two rifles were returned in Knin, as an announced 'expression of good will' in the hope that the formation of a SUP would follow, before any further returns. No Knin SUP was formed, however, and nor were any more arms returned.²³⁵

²³⁰ S. Modrić, 'Krčenje staza za buduće pregovore', *Borba*, 12/9/1990, p.3. S. Stamatović, 'Iyvjiesno opuštanje poslije napetosti', *Borba*, 12/9/1990, p.3. Mirko Ćuruvija, 'Postignut dogovor o vraćanju oružja', *Vjesnik*, 11/9/1990, p.1.

²³¹ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 26, Stenogram of Donji Lapac Press Conference, 10/9/1990, pp.67-8. Milan Đukić, p.50. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). S.S., 'Najava samostalne milicije', *Borba*, 3/8/1990, p.9. Dragan Barjaktarević, 'Hrvatske paralele: Ustaše i Tuđman', *Intervju*, 17/8/1990, pp.12-14. Šimun Penava, *Hrvatski domovinski rat: kronologija rata u Hrvatskoj 1990.-1995* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1995), p.4.

²³² 'Scenarij je doživio krah', *Vjesnik*, 12/9/1990, p.2.

²³³ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 26, Stenogram of Donji Lapac Press Conference, 10/9/1990, pp.67-8. Degoricija, p.214.

²³⁴ S. Stamatović, 'Teško vraćanje izgubljenog povjerenja', *Borba*, 13/9/1990, p.3. Mirko Ćuruvija, 'Oružje jos nije vraćeno', *Vjesnik*, 13/9/1990, p.3. Dragan Durić, 'Ministrove muke', *Vjesnik*, 14/9/1990, p.2. Sanja Modrić, 'Babićev kopernikanski obrat', *Borba*, 17/9/1990, p.5. Jasna Babić, 'Čije je oružje', *Danas*, 18/9/1990, pp.13-15. Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, pp.28-9.

²³⁵ ICTY-Martić: E-503 (Draft Decision on Establishment of SUP Knin, 7/11/1990).

Opposition from more hardline elements may partly explain Babić's shift, but any promise to begin the return of arms was also a very brief diversion from Babić's usual position, and at least partly tactical. The Serbs had actually plied the Croats with *rakija*, plum brandy, whilst drinking water themselves, seemingly to some effect.²³⁶ As Babić noted, what was most important was that they had ended the use of ultimatums, leading to a basis for dialogue.²³⁷

From the Croatian perspective, Boljkovac and others saw no prospect of success in the police action they were threatening and hoped for a negotiated solution. They therefore proclaimed this agreement a success despite the unresolved issues, even citing the return of arms in Obrovac as a result, though this had occurred weeks earlier.²³⁸ As one SDS official noted, these talks merely served for both sides to avoid a confrontation – but neither side was willing to move first and although it reduced tension for the moment, nothing concrete resulted.²³⁹

Escalation and Entrenchment

For the SDS, the key result of the Lapac meeting was the agreement that issues would be resolved by dialogue, not ultimatums. Babić claimed to be optimistic about such dialogue, which the SDS continued to approve, SDS negotiator Vukčević being promoted to party vice-president.²⁴⁰ Two weeks later, however, action by Zagreb again

²³⁶ Srđan Radulović, *Sudbina krajine* (Belgrade: Dan Graf, 1996), p.22. Interview Marko Dobrijević, Organisational Secretary of SDS, 1990-1 (Belgrade: 5/8/2007). '[Balvan revolucija] - Sastanak Josipa Boljkovca i Milana Babića u Donjem Lapcu (10.09.1990.)', *YouTube*, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3o6V2Tr74k>.

²³⁷ Mirko Ćuruvija, 'Nisu porušeni mostović', *Vjesnik*, 11/9/1990, p.12. Stefan Grubač, 'Red poteza u cajtnotu', *NIN*, 14/9/1990, p.16. S. Stamatović, 'Iyvjerno opuštanje poslije napetosti', *Borba*, 12/9/1990, p.3.

²³⁸ 'Scenarij je doživio krah', *Vjesnik*, 12/9/1990, p.2. Jasna Babić, 'Čije je oružje', *Danas*, 18/9/1990, pp.13-15. Vlado Rajić, 'Hrvatska predlaže – savez država', *Vjesnik*, 11/9/1990, pp.1-2. Ivica Marijačić, 'Prepodavali oružje', *Vjesnik*, 11/9/1990, p.12.

²³⁹ S. Modrić, 'Dobivanje na vremenu', *Borba*, 12/9/1990, p.3.

²⁴⁰ Stefan Grubač, 'Red poteza u cajtnotu', *NIN*, 14/9/1990, p.16. Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, p.30. Interview Dušan Vjestica (Belgrade: 9/11/2007).

undermined prospects for talks, reinforced hardline stances on the Serbian side, and radicalised the situation, in Banija now as well as the Knin Krajina.

On 24 September the MUP decided to remove 60% of reserve police arms from SJSs, ostensibly in order to arm new recruits.²⁴¹ This decision again seems to have been targeted at Serb-populated municipalities – at the same time that arms were already being distributed to the HDZ. On the night of 27-28 of September, again secretly, arms were withdrawn from some of the Serb-majority municipalities, including Obrovac (where the Serbs had previously returned the arms to the station), Dvor and perhaps Glina, the latter two in the previously peaceful Banija region. In Petrinja, a mixed municipality in Banija, however, SDS activists had found out about the arms' removal and forced their return to Petrinja SJS. Word then spread throughout Banija, as it had through Knin Krajina on 17 August, and large numbers of Serbs, some armed, gathered and protested outside the SJSs in these and other municipalities, demanding the arms' return or trying to prevent their removal, and blockading town centres. Municipal bodies also demanded the return of arms, but were ignored.²⁴²

In the afternoon of 28 September the Serbs broke into Petrinja SJS and took some police weapons – 45 pistols and 9 rifles – following which Croatian special forces entered the town.²⁴³ They dispersed the gathered Serbs with truncheons, tear gas and water cannon, took control of the town centre, and began searching for the seized arms. Alarmed, Serbs then broke into the Glina SJS, after which specials entered there, too. The same sequence then occurred in Dvor. Serbs also seized arms in Obrovac and Lapac and a complete road and rail blockade was declared in the Knin Krajina. The whole Knin region was mobilised again, with barricades up everywhere and warnings of an Ustaša invasion. Babić even called Knin Radio and told them that special forces were approaching Knin (which was, apparently, again being considered).²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ ICTY-Martić: E-613 (Collection of military documents), pp.22-3.

²⁴² Account constructed from reports in FBIS-EEU-90-190-193, 1-3/10/1990, and *Borba* articles from the period.

²⁴³ ICTY-Martić: E-613 (Collection of military documents), pp.23-4.

²⁴⁴ S. Stamatović & I. Radovanović, 'Otpor "do poslednje kapi"', *Borba*, 1/10/1990, p.3. I. Radovanović,

The Croatian MUP called these events a planned ‘terrorist uprising’, but they seem to have unfolded, rather, as a reaction to the MUP's latest moves to remove arms from predominantly Serb police stations. The Serbs only seized a relatively small quantity of arms: about 250 rifles, 150 pistols, and 25 machine-guns.²⁴⁵ SDS activists generally led the seizures, and in Obrovac and Lapac the municipal presidents certainly authorised these.²⁴⁶ All the municipal authorities in Banija-Kordun (where the SDS was not yet dominant), however, condemned them and appealed for the weapons’ return. Despite a later MUP promise of immunity, however, only one man complied.²⁴⁷

Many Serbs seem to have viewed the intervention of the special forces as a form of occupation and ‘state terror’, which was compared to 1941. Rašković, for example, spoke of ‘violent attacks on the innocent people of Banija’ which ‘border on genocide’: ‘People are fleeing from their homes, as in 1941... The ethnically pure Croatian police, armed to the teeth and reminiscent of the infamous SS troops, are exerting pressure on the Serbian people’.²⁴⁸ After forcefully dispersing Serb crowds the Croatian specials, many of whom had been recruited from that very region, apparently mistreated the population during weapons searches, entering homes without warrants, arresting and beating people, and even, local officials claimed, searching school children at gun point.²⁴⁹ The Serbian newspaper *Politika* reported 360 arrested in Banija. Zagreb claimed that the figure was more than ten times fewer, and most were released in a week, but prominent figures, including the two main Serb leaders in Petrinja and the

“Dva rata” u mesec dana', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2.

²⁴⁵ D. Pušonjić, 'Svakom svoja istina', *Borba*, 4/10/1990, p.3.

²⁴⁶ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). Milan Jajčinović, 'Pobuna u krajini', *Danas*, 9/10/1990, pp.12-13.

²⁴⁷ 'Tensions Ease Slightly; Dvor na Uni Arms Returned', *Tanjug*, 3/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-193, 4/10/1990. 'Petrinja People Said in Hiding; Arms Not Returned', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 5/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-195, 9/10/1990. M. Krmpotić, 'Specijalci “čuvaju” mir', *Borba*, 1/10/1991, p.1. V. Ilić, 'Sramota nacionalnog aršina', *Borba*, 3/10/1990, p.1.

²⁴⁸ Jovan Rašković, 'What DANAS Does Not Dare To Publish', *NIN*, 28/12/1990, pp.28-29, in FBIS-EER-91-018, 11/2/1991. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.130. Also: Snježana Stamatović, 'Autonomija nije pala s neba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.5.

²⁴⁹ See, for example: M. Krmpotić, 'Specijalci “čuvaju” mir', *Borba*, 1/10/1991, p.1. 'Specijalci i djecu pretresaju!', *Borba*, 2/1/1990, p.2. ICTY-Milošević: E359.1 (Human Rights Watch Report, 1/1991). Interview Borislav Mikelic (Belgrade: 2007). Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, pp.35-6.

heads of Petrinja and Glina SJS, remained imprisoned.²⁵⁰ Schools were shut down and economic life stopped, villagers fled to the forests with arms, and several hundred people gathered by a JNA barracks seeking protection.²⁵¹ As Boljkovac himself later said, Banija was solved with 'beatings/truncheons'.²⁵²

Municipal organs demanded that Croatian forces withdraw, which they did in early October, after the SFRJ Presidency requested this. As well as the arrests of police chiefs, some other Serb policemen in these municipalities resigned or were forced out, and new Croat recruits soon arrived. Village watches, war staffs and arming of the people now escalated in Banija, too, but traffic was still free and the region's police stations remained more fully under Zagreb's control.²⁵³

These conflicts caused a serious deterioration of relations in Croatia. Knin Krajina was completely blockaded, and Banija was now involved in clashes. Tensions also spread elsewhere, including in Slavonia.²⁵⁴ The SNV condemned 'Ustaša terror' and supported resistance by 'all means'; the SDS decided to suspend all relations with the HDZ.²⁵⁵ In the Sabor the SDS's delegate was hit with a briefcase and forced off the rostrum, while HDZ extremists spoke of banishing Serbs from Croatia.²⁵⁶ Babić accused the MUP of

²⁵⁰ Snježana Mulić, 'Samo sloga Hrvatsku spašava', *Deno Novo*, 12/10/1990, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.idoconline.info/article/342563>. ICTY-Martić: E-613 (Collection of military documents), pp.23-4. Sanja Modrić & Miro Krmpotić, 'Logorovanje u kasarni', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2. V. Ilić, 'Primirje u ratu živaca', *Borba*, 4/10/1990, p.2. M.K., 'Na terenu po istinu', *Borba*, 6/10/1990, p.11. 'Glina Official Interviewed on 'Tense' Situation', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 4/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-194, 5/10/1990.

²⁵¹ HMDC-DR: *Knjiga 1*, Document 21 (JNA report, 3/10/1990), pp.57-8. M. Krmpotić, 'Specijalci "čuvaju" mir', *Borba*, 1/10/1991, p.1. Sanja Modrić & Miro Krmpotić, 'Logorovanje u kasarni', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2.

²⁵² Lovrenović and Lučić, p.44.

²⁵³ 'Glina Official Interviewed on 'Tense' Situation', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 4/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-194, 5/10/1990. 'Petrinja People Said in Hiding; Arms Not Returned', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 5/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-195, 9/10/1990. 'Dvor na Uni Stops Payments to Federal Budget', *Tanjug*, 7/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-240, 13/12/1990. V. Ilić, 'Primirje u ratu živaca', *Borba*, 4/10/1990, p.2. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić. Interview Mile Bosnić, President of Slunj SDS (Belgrade: 2/11/2007).

²⁵⁴ Ivica Miškulin, 'Srpska pobuna u općini Pakrac 1990.-1991', pp.366-7. S.M., 'Kriminalni čin', *Borba*, 1/10/1990, p.3. Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009).

²⁵⁵ I. Radovanović, 'Proglašena autonomija!', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.1. I. Radovanović, 'SDS prekida pregovora sa HDZ-om', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2.

²⁵⁶ Mirić, p.190. 'Talks Without Agreement', *Danas*, 16/10/1990, pp.22-24 in FBIS-EEU-90-151,

breaking their agreement not to use force, and certainly now – if there had been before – there was no question of the Serbs in Knin and elsewhere returning their arms.²⁵⁷

Federal Yugoslav organs attempted to calm the situation and promote dialogue. In the first half of October, three federal delegations toured the relevant municipalities in Croatia alongside a Croatian delegation (Boljkovac, Degoricija). In Knin, Babić and others objected to the presence of Boljkovac while Serbs were still imprisoned, but all these meetings went ahead, both sides emphasising the need for further dialogue.²⁵⁸ There were no concrete results, however, and although contacts and some meetings continued, there were no more serious talks on resolving the problem of the barricades in Knin Krajina.²⁵⁹ With these events, the talk of dialogue in September was completely superseded, and Babić now proclaimed the barricades 'the greatest guarantee of security here in Knin'.²⁶⁰ Both sides were now fully convinced of the need to prepare for conflict, with the main arming taking place from October onwards. Militarisation was entrenched.

5/11/1990.

²⁵⁷ Stefan Grubač, 'Nećemo da budemo naivni', *MIN*, 5/19/1990, pp.10-13. I. Radovanović, "'Dva rata" u mesec dana', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2. 'Neodgovorni ministar', *Borba*, 8-9/12/1990, p.14. Snježana Stamatović, 'Ne priznajemo diktat Zagreba', *Borba*, 7/1/1991, p.5. 'Talks Without Agreement', *Danas*, 16/10/1990, pp.22-24 in FBIS-EEU-90-151, 5/11/1990. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.46-7.

²⁵⁸ Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, pp.38-9. M.K., 'Na terenu po istinu', *Borba*, 6/10/1990, p.11. S. Stamatović, 'Sastanak bez dnevnog reda', *Borba*, 8/10/1990, p.1. 'Talks Without Agreement', *Danas*, 16/10/1990, pp.22-24 in FBIS-EEU-90-151, 5/11/1990.

²⁵⁹ 'Sve manje optimizma', *Borba*, 11/10/1990, p.1. 'Deblokada pa dijalog', *Borba*, 11/10/1990, p.1.

²⁶⁰ 'Talks Without Agreement', *Danas*, 16/10/1990, pp.22-24 in FBIS-EEU-90-151, 5/11/1990.

3.7. Milan Babić: From Rebel to Witness

In 2001, after being named as a co-conspirator in the ICTY indictment of Milošević for crimes in Croatia, Milan Babić began talking to Hague investigators. The following year he testified against Milošević, providing key 'insider' testimony for the OTP. Babić seems to have been at least partly motivated by a desire to avoid prosecution himself, but he was indicted anyway the following year.²⁶¹ He negotiated a deal for a lighter sentence and subsequently testified at several more trials, before committing suicide in March 2006, part-way into his testimony against Martić. His testimony was essential to a number of OTP cases, and continued to be employed after his death.

In The Hague Babić claimed that a secretive, Belgrade-connected 'parallel structure' was behind the descent into conflict in Croatia from autumn 1990 onwards, including the events of 17 August and later. He generally tried to present himself as a moderate at heart who – despite being famous for the number of executive posts he accumulated - unfortunately held no real power, and blamed almost the entire conflict on this 'parallel structure' directed by Milošević through the Serbian DB. He named most other Krajina Serb leaders and officials as part of this 'structure' - including some of his own close allies, and people he had removed because of their moderation.²⁶² He almost always denied his own agency, at times to the point of absurdity. His campaign against Rašković (discussed in Chapter 6) does not appear at all in his accounts, and he often tried to shift responsibility for his own decisions and statements onto others, such as his advisor, Boro Rašuo. Claiming to have realised later that Rašuo had been part of the 'parallel structure' all along, Babić even argued that many of his actions in 1991-92 which Milošević had strongly opposed²⁶³ were actually orchestrated by Milošević in order to discredit him. ('God help me... you are engaging in science fiction now', was Milošević's response.)²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12861, 13597.

²⁶² Such as Dušan Štarević, discussed in Chapter 6.

²⁶³ Discussed in Chapter 6.

²⁶⁴ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13509-18. ICTY investigators themselves seemed highly sceptical of Babić's claims in this area, asking if him for evidence, something they did not do for many

Babić also tended to downplay Croatian actions to which the Serbs claimed they were responding, bringing his account in line with the OTP's. For example, he insisted that the 'Balvan Revolution' showed that the Serbian side was the first to use force – though Croatian sources themselves acknowledge that they had sent special forces towards Knin.²⁶⁵

A detailed analysis of Babić's account, cross-checked against numerous other sources, shows that it was self-serving, misleading, and strongly marked by paranoia (a trait Babić exhibited already in 1990, as noted in Chapter 6). When used critically and in conjunction with other sources, however, even testimonies as problematic as Babić's can be revelatory. His accounts were characterised more by misrepresentation and self-justification than outright fabrication, and much in them appears to be true. His revelations about the Karadžorđevo talks, which he first made in 1992, for example, are confirmed by a number of Croatian sources.²⁶⁶ Through their employment in the ICTY Babić's testimonies are also in the process of being written into the history of the war in Croatia and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It is for these reasons that I generally engage with Babić's versions of events, rather than simply dismissing them due to their problematic nature.

The 'Council of National Resistance'

A core part of Babić's Hague testimony was his claim that in autumn and winter 1990 Belgrade's 'parallel structure' was represented by the 'Council of National Resistance' (SNO), which was led by Martić and blocked Babić's efforts to find a peaceful solution. Babić claimed, for example, that he had agreed the return of the Knin arms on 10

other topics, and it is notable that they did not lead any evidence on this issue. ICTY-Babić: E-PS.2.14 (Babić Interview), pp.23-24.

²⁶⁵ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1778-82.

²⁶⁶ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13111-2. Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who "Disappeared"', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993. Svetislav Spasojević, 'Milan Babić: Battle for Krajina (2): Tailors of Destiny', *NIN*, 25/12/1992, in FBIS-EEU-93-014, 25/1/1993. Confirmed by, among others: ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Stjepan Kljuić, HDZ-BH President, 1990-92, T24393; Stjepan Mesić, T10657.

September, but the SNO refused to implement the agreement, and that evening or the following day one of its members even threatened to kill him.²⁶⁷

However, the overwhelming majority of evidence clearly shows that Babić supported the arming and organising of the Krajina Serbs from mid-1990 onwards, and refutes his Hague testimonies. For example, Babić claimed that on 17 August he was 'tricked' by the 'parallel structure' into believing Croatian forces were advancing, and that Martić independently distributed the police arms. But in his own interview with the BBC Babić had described how he ordered Martić to distribute those arms and deliberately waited hours after learning the Croats were not advancing before relaying this.²⁶⁸ Two sources report that earlier that day Babić had also tried to order the Knin TO to mobilise, while media reports show that in early October Babić personally called Knin Radio to warn that the specials were again advancing.²⁶⁹

Investigation of different aspects of the 'Balvan Revolution' continually brings one back to Babić. Indeed, the vast majority of sources, including all five sources I have found that acknowledge involvement in the SNO itself,²⁷⁰ indicate that Babić was himself in charge of the SNO, a loose co-ordinating body of those involved in the uprising, and of 'resistance' activities in Knin – as Babić himself had previously described to the BBC.²⁷¹ The only contemporary 'insider' source on this issue, a statement by an SNO member to JNA security organs in December 1990, for example, describes in detail how Babić had

²⁶⁷ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12934-6.

²⁶⁸ During which time the 'war state' was reported over Knin Radio 'more than a dozen times'. 'Grubi nasrtaj na Hrvatsku', *Vjesnik*, 18/8/1990, p.1. Numerous sources confirm Babić's order for mobilisation: see footnote 130.

²⁶⁹ I. Radovanović, "Dva rata" u mesec dana', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Dragišić, commander of Knin TO, 1990-91, T8589-90. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

²⁷⁰ Milan Martić, Simo Dubajić, Ognjen Biserko, MM-003/JF-039 and DST-043: Predrag Popović, "Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]", *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-978 (Statement of MM-003); Witnesses JF-039, DST-043. ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić; Submission of Statement of Milan Martić (8/5/2013), paras 44-5.

²⁷¹ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Dragišić. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić. Interviews: Dušan Orlović; Mile Bosnić; Branko Perić; Ratko Ličina (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 55 (Official Note about connections between Arkan and Milan Babić, 31/5/1991), pp.138-9.

the authority to include and exclude people from the SNO.²⁷² Based on several such statements and other contacts, JNA security reported that Babić was the 'commander' of the SNO, and Martić 'his deputy'.²⁷³ Informed journalists at the time thought similarly: the anonymous SNO was simply a cover for Babić and others to avoid political and legal responsibility for public statements advocating 'resistance' to Zagreb.²⁷⁴ I have found only one source that confirms Babić's account on this issue: Drago Kovačević, a key deputy of Babić in 1993-95 and his sole witness in his trial.²⁷⁵ However, Kovačević played no role in events in 1990-91, being an opposition deputy in Knin at the time, and himself confirmed to me that he then had very little contact with Babić.²⁷⁶ His claimed knowledge of secretive, behind-the-scenes developments from this period is evidently simply derived from Babić, whose account he repeats almost identically, and is thus of little evidentiary value.

There is some evidence of disagreements in Knin over the Lapac talks. The Croatian delegation claimed that Babić became uncooperative part way through the meeting, after a phone call from hardliners announcing a decision to assassinate the Croats.²⁷⁷ Members of the Serbian delegation, including Babić himself, have not supported this claim,²⁷⁸ but a poll at the time did show that 60% of SDS members opposed the agreement, as did many in the SNV, such as Opačić and Zelenbaba.²⁷⁹ Babić's freedom of action was undoubtedly constrained, just as Rašković's was. But his agreement to

²⁷² ICTY-Martić: E872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). Details confirmed by: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043, SDS and SNO activist, and Vasiljević, p.94.

²⁷³ Vasiljević, p.94.

²⁷⁴ Jasna Babić, 'Čije je oružje', *Danas*, 18/9/1990, pp.13-15. I. Radovanović, "'Dva rata" u mesec dana', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2. I.R., 'Ranjena dva milicionara', *Borba*, 4/10/1990, p.2. Interview Filip Švarn, *Vreme* journalist (Belgrade: 17/7/2007). S. Stamatović & I. Radovanović, 'Otpor "do poslednje kapi"', *Borba*, 1/10/1990, p.3.

²⁷⁵ See Kovačević, *op. cit.*, and ICTY-Babić: Witness Drago Kovačević.

²⁷⁶ Interview Drago Kovačević (Belgrade: 25/7/2007).

²⁷⁷ Degoricija, pp.147-9, 152-3, 214. Boljkovac, pp.199-201.

²⁷⁸ Đukić, pp.49-50. Interview Dušan Vjestica (Belgrade: 9/11/2007). ICTY-Babić: Defence Motion Annex 2 (Witness Statements), p.18. Also: ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003.

²⁷⁹ Dejan Jović, 'Jastrebovi nize lete', *Danas*, 2/10/1990, pp.16-19. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T1773. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.2 (Babić Interview), p.14. Mirko Ćuruvija & Miroslav Ivić, 'Glavna tema oružje', *Vjesnik*, 9/9/1990, p.1. S. Stamatović, 'Teško vraćanje izgubljenog povjerenja', *Borba*, 13/9/1990, p.3. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). S.I.B., 'Ni u šumu, ni na drum', *Borba*, 3/10/1990, p.4.

begin the return of arms was at least partly tactical and very temporary, lasting a day at most, and it seems very unlikely that he ever actually ordered the return of arms, some of which were held by his own security detail.²⁸⁰ The SNO's statement on this controversy came on 12 September, after Babić had already reverted to his normal position, and actually defended Babić, repeating his own stances.²⁸¹ As already shown, moreover, any question of returning arms in Knin or disagreement on this issue was soon entirely superseded by renewed action by the Croatian MUP.

Babić presented only very flimsy evidence that the SNO was connected with Belgrade, claiming that in late August 1990 Martić introduced him to Serbian DB official Jovica Stanišić near Knin. However, Babić also said that he attached no importance to this at the time and forgot he had even met Stanišić, only realising that he was a significant person the following spring.²⁸² Thus, according to Babić's own testimony, it was only *after* autumn and winter 1990 that he could have concluded that Martić and the SNO in that period were working with Belgrade, extrapolating from this one introduction that this was the case. The overwhelming majority of evidence points to Babić's close involvement in this sector in autumn and winter 1990, his co-operation with Martić and his authoritative position in the SNO, and this, in my opinion, strongly suggests that any role by the Serbian DB in this period must have been fairly minimal. Otherwise, Babić would have known about it, and would have provided stronger evidence of it, rather than relying on such weak evidence for such a pivotal part of his Hague thesis. As discussed in Chapter 5, it does seem likely that individuals from the Serbian DB visited the Knin Krajina in autumn and winter 1990, establishing contact with people such as Martić, and probably also sending some minor material assistance. But large quantities of such assistance, or the DB having a major role in controlling or directing developments in this period, can, I think, be ruled out. The 'Balvan Revolution' was

²⁸⁰ ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043, SDS activist and SNO member. Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009). Mirko Ćuruvija, 'Čekaju "službene instrukcije"', 12/9/1990, p.1. Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11.

²⁸¹ S. Stamatović, 'Apel', *Borba*, 13/9/1990, p.3.

²⁸² ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.5 (Babić Interview), pp.23-6. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12932-3.

instigated and led by locals, Babić and Martić first among them, not a 'parallel structure' controlled by Belgrade.

3.8. Polarisation Entrenched

In the last months of 1990 political polarisation between the HDZ and SDS was further entrenched and cemented, culminating with the passing of the new Croatian constitution and the formation of SAOK in December 1990, which set the stage for the coming conflict.

In mid-September the most radical faction in the SDS, Opačić and Zelenbaba, had quit the party in protest against Rašković's approach, in particular his support for the rise of Babić at their expense. At the time, Vukčević was elected an SDS Vice-President, and reported that the party had endorsed continued talks. Nothing had resulted from his previous talks, however, so, as Vukčević recalls, hardliners were able to argue that they only benefited the HDZ.²⁸³

With the escalation in late September the SDS announced that it was, again, suspending all contacts with the Croats. The SNV also declared autonomy in Serb territories, tasking itself with forming autonomous institutions, although this was not actually done. With Babić's people insisting on talks only with the SNV which he headed, and conflicts over municipalities' membership of the Association, talks between Croatian negotiators such as Degoricija and the Serb-majority municipalities were increasingly refused, or brought no results.²⁸⁴ At a meeting of the SDS Executive Board on 20 October the SDS then formally adopted its more radical programme, certainly a sign of how the situation had escalated.

In October there were still several initiatives for talks, though. On 18 October Vladimir Ivković, an SDS vice-president from Zagreb, attended a meeting of all political parties in Croatia, which formed a group, to be led by him, which would visit the affected

²⁸³ Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007). Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, p.30.

²⁸⁴ 'Sve manje optimizma', *Borba*, 11/10/1990, p.1.

municipalities.²⁸⁵ Babić's faction rejected this on the grounds that HDZ-SDS contacts were suspended, and there were reports that Ivković had been dismissed from his post (though he was not - presumably because Rašković backed him).²⁸⁶ On 20 October, meanwhile, the SDS authorised resumed contacts with the HDZ, with Vukčević remaining in post as designated negotiator. On 24 October, he met again with the HDZ, represented by Degoricija. These talks, were, however, denounced by Babić's faction, which claimed that Vukčević had been endorsed only to begin contacts with the HDZ, not full talks, and that only the SNV headed by Babić could negotiate on behalf of the Serb nation.²⁸⁷ Rašković wrote a letter of support for Vukčević, and he maintained his post, but the hardliners soon began a campaign against him.²⁸⁸

At his meeting with Vukčević, Degoricija had announced a concession: as the Serbs objected so much to the proposed definition of Croatia which downgraded their status, then this would be moved to the preamble, and Article 1 of the constitution would simply define Croatia as a state of its citizens.²⁸⁹ (This had also been sought by the main opposition party, the former communist SDP, *Stranka demokratske promjene*.)²⁹⁰ Gagnon claims that this compromise satisfied Vukčević, who endorsed the new constitution passed in December 1990.²⁹¹ In fact, both he and Rašković strongly opposed that constitution, arguing that with it the Serbs lost their status as a constituent nation, and Vukčević considers it the prime cause of the war.²⁹² Rašković and Vukčević's stance was outlined in their proposals submitted in December 1990, upon Letica's

²⁸⁵ 'Croatian Political Parties Meet, Issue Statement', *Tanjug*, 18/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-203, 19/10/1990.

²⁸⁶ Marinko Čulić, 'Vladimir Ivković: Još sam potpredsjednik', *Danas*, 6/11/1990, p.11.

²⁸⁷ Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac (Belgrade: 5/8/2007).

²⁸⁸ Jovan Rašković, 'Mišljenje', 29/10/1990 (author's copy). Petar Štikovac & Marko Dobrijević, 'I na nebu, i na zemlju', *Borba*, 17/12/1990, p.2. Velimir Ilić, 'Nervi za grešnu strepnju', *Borba*, 9-10/2/1991, p.5. V. Ilić, 'Nisam ja izdajica', *Borba*, 22/4/1991.

²⁸⁹ Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007).

²⁹⁰ Tomac, p.70. Željko Sabol, *Proglašenje Božićnog Ustava i slika o tom događaju* (Zagreb: Hrvatski sabor, 2003), pp.66-7.

²⁹¹ Gagnon, p.145.

²⁹² Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007). ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Vojislav Vukčević, T11078-9. Velimir Ilić, 'Nervi za grešnu strepnju', *Borba*, 9-10/2/1991, p.5. 'Croatian Serbs Reject New Constitution', *Tanjug*, 23/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-247, 24/12/1990. Momčilović, p.24. Others in the Slavonian SDS expressed the same stance: Miškulin, 'Srpska pobuna u općini Pakrac...', p.366. Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda...', pp.27-8.

request. As discussed in Chapter 2, they demanded a bi-national state, territorial autonomy and federal Yugoslavia, with the prospect of self-determination hinted at too.²⁹³ Babić, meanwhile, submitted his proposals for more expansive territorial autonomy, which were rejected out of hand as creating a 'state within a state'. The differences between the HDZ and SDS were simply too vast to be bridged, and none of the SDS proposals were accepted.

At the end of October the Croatian Presidency had created a mixed commission to draft proposals for cultural autonomy, which included some prominent Serbian and Croatian intellectuals in Croatia.²⁹⁴ The SDS, however, strongly rejected this project, which Rašković called a 'farce'.²⁹⁵ At the end of November Rašković even attended a public tribune with Degoricija where he denounced the whole cultural autonomy project, insisting this was something they considered only in an earlier phase - now, they favoured territorial autonomy and self-determination.²⁹⁶ Džakula felt similarly.²⁹⁷ SDS leaders simply were not interested in negotiating cultural autonomy within an independent Croatia, as the Croatian leadership offered – or, at this stage, such non-territorial cultural autonomy even if Croatia remained in Yugoslavia.²⁹⁸

Nor did the Croatian leadership itself demonstrate much willingness to implement its promises of cultural autonomy. When the new Croatian constitution was finally passed on 22 December 1990, Croatia was defined as a citizens' state as Degoricija had promised, but there was also a long, nationalist preamble about the Croatian nation. This ended by defining Croatia as 'the national state of the Croatian nation and a state of members of other nations and minorities who are its citizens: Serbs, Muslims, Slovenes, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Hungarians, Jews and others, who are guaranteed equality

²⁹³ Jovan Rašković, 'Primjedbe na nacrt Ustava Repbulike Hrvatske', 11/12/1990 (author's copy).

²⁹⁴ Milan Jajčinović, 'Creation of a West Serbia', *Danas*, 30/10/1990, pp.26-27 in FBIS-EEU-90-165, 17/12/1990.

²⁹⁵ Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1991*, pp.41-42.

²⁹⁶ I. Tomljanović, 'Tezi i negodvanja', *Borba*, 1-2/12/1990, p.11. Also: Milan Jajčinović, 'Krajina mimo ustava', *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

²⁹⁷ Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda...', p.54.

²⁹⁸ Milan Jajčinović, 'Krajina mimo ustava', *Danas*, 25/12/1990, pp.14-15.

with citizens of Croatian nationality and the realization of ethnic rights in accordance with the democratic norms of the United Nations and countries of free world.²⁹⁹ Lofty promises of equality aside, Serbs, although mentioned, were downgraded to the status of a minority like all others, and no longer afforded any special recognition. In addition, Latin was declared the official script and Croatian the official language; provisions on cultural autonomy and other rights were left to future laws, which were not passed for another year.³⁰⁰ Detailed provisions on cultural autonomy and proportional representation for Serbs had been prepared by a member of the Croatian Presidency's commission, moderate SDP Serb Simo Rajić, but he was 'tricked' and his provisions rejected at the last moment, prompting him to resign shortly afterwards.³⁰¹ The question of Serbian rights in Croatia was clearly a sensitive one for the HDZ, and such rights were something to be granted only in a Croat-Serb agreement. There was little willingness to grant such rights unilaterally, or in alliance with a minority of Serb moderates - let alone to concede a Serbian right to territorial autonomy and self-determination as sought by Rašković and others in the SDS.

With the passing of the new constitution and the formation of SAO Krajina at the end of December 1990, the dye was cast for the coming conflict. The Knin Krajina region was off limits to Croatian police, and militarisation well underway, with the Croatian side in particular having imported and distributed large quantities of arms. Most Serbs were alienated by the new constitution, and most Serbian deputies stopped attending the Croatian Sabor.³⁰² SAOK was formed and led by hardliners who rejected talks with Zagreb, and was on its way to secession from Croatia. Thereafter, few Croat-Serb talks would take place.

²⁹⁹ 'Ustav Republike Hrvatske', *Narodne Novine*, No. 56, 22/12/1990.

³⁰⁰ 'Odluka o proglašenju Ustavnog zakona o ljudskim pravima i slobodama i o pravima etničkih i nacionalnih, zajednica ili manjina u Republici Hrvatskoj', *Narodne Novine*, No.65, 4/12/91.

³⁰¹ Interviews: Simo Rajić (Zagreb: 30/9/2009); Milorad Pupovac, President of SDF, 1991-95 (Zagreb: 1/10/2009). For the content of the proposals, see: Drago Roksandić, 'Ljudska i građanska prava i otvorena pitanja personalne i kulturne autonomije Srba u Hrvatskoj', *Scientia Yugoslavica*, 16, br. 3-4 (1990), pp.217-228. Sabol, pp.29-31.

³⁰² 'Serbian Deputies Boycott Croatian Assembly', *Tanjug*, 31/1/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-022, 1/2/1991. Zoran Daskalović, 'Zašto su otišili', *Danas*, 12/2/1991, pp.21-22.

3.9. Conclusions

The gradual descent into conflict in 1990 seems, in many respects, to have been an inevitable result of the gulf between the programmes of the key protagonists of the conflict, the HDZ and the SDS. Rašković was always slightly out of step in this process. He never had full control of the SDS, which contained strong hardline factions from the start, pushing for more radical courses of action, from the suspending of talks in May 1990 to the SNV and the 'Balvan Revolution'. But the mobilisation of Serbs in Croatia behind a platform of unilaterally building Serbian autonomy, and preparing the ground for secession from Croatia, was very much Rašković's own policy, and the gulf between his own ideas and those in Zagreb was far too large for any compromise to emerge. In this sense, the idea of Rašković representing a 'missed opportunity' sabotaged by Serb hardliners and Belgrade, and perhaps Zagreb too, is somewhat off the mark. The significance of Serb hardliners, and their blocking of Croat-Serb talks, as opposed to Rašković and SDS moderates, has also been overstated by some authors in this respect. Moreover, although Zagreb supported negotiations it displayed little willingness to actually change its core programme or policies as a result, and on the contrary, did much to contribute to the radicalisation of the situation.

Each side reacted to the other, in what was in many respects a security dilemma, particularly in the security sphere itself. Arming and organising of military forces began roughly concurrently on both sides, and was, in this period, conducted on a larger scale on the Croatian side, while the Serbian rebellion in the Knin Krajina appears to have been triggered by actions of the Croatian MUP, contrary to the usual focus on orchestrated Serbian arming and rebelling. The gap between the two sides on this issue was also too wide for negotiations to succeed. Although after 17 August Zagreb ultimately eschewed further police operations in Knin, these were constantly under consideration, and this, along with operations in Banija and the arming of the HDZ, helped maintain the Serb sense of being under threat.

Contrary to Milan Babić's Hague testimonies, the 'Balvan Revolution' appears to have been organised and led by locals, Babić (and Martić) foremost among them, rather than a secret structure controlled by Belgrade. His 10 September agreement with Zagreb seems to have been more a means for both sides to avoid direct confrontation than a concrete agreement as such, and it was soon superseded by renewed MUP activities two weeks later. Rašković himself understood the rebellion as being motivated by a desire for defence from Croatian attack and did not advocate 'capitulation', despite his pacifist inclinations. Overall, the descent into conflict in Croatia during this period can be explained well by the escalating interactions between Croats and Serbs within Croatia, the HDZ and the SDS, Zagreb and Knin, leaving little need for 'Belgrade' as a direct explanatory factor triggering or directing developments. In the following chapters I will examine the precise role that Belgrade played in these developments, as well as developments in 1991. First, however, I will step sideways, to consider Belgrade's plans and policies towards Croatia in this period.

Chapter 4: The 'External National Homeland': Serbia and the Descent into War in Croatia

This chapter considers the policies of Serbia – the 'external national homeland', to use Brubaker's terminology - towards Croatia, from the first significant expressions of Serbian nationalism towards Croatia in the late 1980s to the beginning of the war proper in summer/autumn 1991. The dominant tendency is to view Belgrade as orchestrating a Greater Serbian attack on Croatia, consciously interfering and manipulating developments there to provoke the descent into war and, moreover, actually destroying rather than defending Yugoslavia. The evidence considered here, however, suggests that a much more nuanced understanding of Serbian policy is necessary, taking into greater account the perceptions and assessments of Serbian leaders at the time, no matter how misguided they were.

This chapter examines Serbia's thinking on the future of Yugoslavia and the Serbs in Croatia, Serbia's proposals and strategies for realising its goals, and the 'advice' Serbia gave to the Serbs in Croatia, as well as the JNA's attitude towards developments in Croatia. A range of primary sources are used to determine Serbian policy; the diary of Serbia's then representative on the Yugoslav Presidency, Borisav Jović, which is widely cited in the existing literature, however, remains an absolutely key source. Although obviously only his version of events, Jović's diary does appear to be a contemporary record, and in The Hague Milošević himself confirmed much of its contents.¹ As such, it therefore offers unrivalled access to the private thoughts of Milošević and Jović at the time.

¹ ICTY- Milošević: Witness Borisav Jovic.

4.1. Serbian Policy Towards Croatia, 1989-90

Background: the Rise of Milošević and the 'Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution'

In late 1987 Serbian party leader Slobodan Milošević ousted his former patron, Serbian president Ivan Stambolić, and secured his dominant position in Serbia. Over the course of the following two years he entered into increasing confrontation with the other republics and Serbia's autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, in his pursuit of Serbian political objectives, aimed at reducing the autonomy of those provinces and strengthening the Yugoslav federation. Milošević was aided by an alliance with a protest movement, started by Kosovo Serbs but soon expanding into Serbia and Vojvodina, which pressured Serbia's opponents and developed into the so-called 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. In late 1988 and early 1989 the leaderships of both Vojvodina and Kosovo, and the republic of Montenegro, were replaced by allies of Milošević, and in March 1989 amendments to Serbia's constitution, strengthening the republic, finally passed. Milošević then turned his attention to the Yugoslav party and federation, urging reforms to increase the power of the federal state and reverse tendencies towards the confederalisation of Yugoslavia.²

A notable precursor to these developments was the drafting of the 'Memorandum' of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (*Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti*, SANU), leaked to the press in late 1986, which revealed the thinking of much of Serbia's intellectual elite.³ The Memorandum advocated a re-federalisation of Yugoslavia, identifying the confederal tendencies of the 1974 constitution as resulting from an anti-Serbian policy. It also attacked Croatia as anti-Serbian, because of the lack of Serbian cultural autonomy and declining use of Cyrillic among Serbs in that republic.⁴ Serbian

² For these proposals, see, for example: Sell, pp.96-8. Dejan Jović, *Yugoslavia*, pp.283-5, 340-1.

³ See: Kosta Mihailović & Vasilije Krestić, *Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences: Answers to Criticisms* (Belgrade: SANU, 1995).

⁴ *Ibid*, p.133.

communists initially attacked the Memorandum as nationalist, but by the end of the 1980s Milošević was effectively allying with its authors.⁵ Ever-widening Serbian nationalism became a new legitimising force for Milošević and the Serbian communist party, as was an effective alliance with parts of the SANU elite, who endorsed Milošević's national politics and were in turn given wide latitude in the media and society. A few of the SANU intellectuals would even join Milošević's new Socialist Party (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*, SPS), formed in July 1990; others affiliated with or helped form the Serbian opposition, being anti-communist or concerned with full democratisation as well as national issues.⁶

Milošević's rise to power and political strategies and goals, the protest movement of Kosovo Serbs and the anti-bureaucratic revolution are often seen as part of a grand, nationalist plan of Milošević (and, sometimes, the SANU elite), with the protests directed from Belgrade.⁷ However, Nebojša Vladislavljević has convincingly demonstrated that, although Milošević did exploit an alliance with the protesters, their movement arose and operated autonomously.⁸ Indeed, the protests that led to the fall of the leadership of Vojvodina in October 1988 and its replacement by pro-Milošević figures had actually initially been opposed by Milošević.⁹ Moreover, although Milošević's tactics, and his later fuller embrace of Serbian nationalism, did differ from his predecessors in Serbia, his actual policy proposals and ideas were very similar to those advocated by Stambolić and others before him, developed since the early and mid-1980s.¹⁰ Milošević, initially at least, was thus more a bombastic advocate of already existing Serbian party policy than a radical convert to Serbian nationalism.

⁵ Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Saviours of the Nation?: Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp.220-2. Gordy, *The Culture of Power*, p.27. It has also been argued that Milošević deliberately avoided public participation in the campaign against the Memorandum, though Jović argues that this was because he did not think the party should waste time debating dissidents. Jović, *Yugoslavia*, pp.252-3. See also: Sell, pp.46-7. Vladislavljević, *Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution*, pp.66-7.

⁶ Sell, p.111. Dragović-Soso, pp.238-44. 'Šta razlikuje republiku srpsku od Srbije [Interview with Mihailo Marković]', *Intervju*, 16/9/1994.

⁷ For example: Sell, pp.54-63, 80-8, 100-1. Silber & Little, pp.37-69. Tanner, pp.215-20. Gagnon, pp.67-71. LeBor, pp.107-9. Judah, p.163.

⁸ Vladislavljević, *op. cit.*.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp.124-5, 135, 158.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.69-77. Also noted by: Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, p.30. Dragović-Soso, pp.212-3.

The Man At the Top

In order to fully understand Milošević's policies towards Croatia, it is necessary to briefly consider the nature of the regime he led, and his modus operandi. Due to a comparative lack of sources for the period 1990-91, this requires a less temporally restricted examination, looking at the first half of the 1990s as a whole.

Milošević is often seen as a master manipulator and orchestrator of events (Ramet likens him to Shakespeare's Richard III),¹¹ and – although some attention has been given to civil-military relations under Milošević¹² - the literature, and the ICTY Prosecution, have usually treated his regime, 'Belgrade', as a single, homogeneous and monolithic power centre, with Milošević at its pinnacle. The actions of certain components of his regime – most notably the Serbian MUP/DB and hardliners like Mihalj Kertes who associated with them,¹³ as well as the Serbian media – are therefore used to read Milošević's own politics, on the assumption that they were operating on his instructions.

Much evidence, however, points instead to the fragmented and factional nature of Milošević's regime in the 1990s. There was, for example, a perennial rivalry between the army of Serbia/Montenegro (known from 1992 as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and the Serbian police – 'mafiosi', as Yugoslav army (*Vojska Jugoslavije*, VJ) chief Momčilo Perišić called them in 1995.¹⁴ This conflict dated back to socialist times, and was accentuated by Milošević's preference for the police as an institution more closely connected to his personal rule. Both institutions competed for Milošević's support and resources, and their rivalry was also exported to the RSK and RS (*Republika Srpska*, the Bosnian Serb republic), where each independently strove to

¹¹ Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p.72.

¹² For example: Gow, *The Serbian Project*, pp.64-79.

¹³ An ethnic Hungarian, Mihalj Kertes rose to prominence in the 'Yoghurt Revolution' in Vojvodina in October 1988. He was subsequently a member of the Presidency of Serbia, and in 1992 deputy federal Interior Minister. He was closely associated with the MUP/DB and other hardliners - though, as Vladisavljević shows, he does not appear to have been working for Belgrade before the Vojvodina upheaval. Vladisavljević, *op. cit.*, pp.157-9.

¹⁴ ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1427.E (Mladić Diary, 28/8/1995-15/1/1996), pp.23-4.

strengthen their counterparts and weaken their rivals. As a Yugoslav army official told RS military chief Ratko Mladić in 1994, for example, the Serbian MUP was 'involved in a lot of dirty business' and trying to '[push] the military into the background': 'the MUP in the Krajina and RS wants to take over everything', and 'Many things start here [in Belgrade] and go via the Krajina and the RS'.¹⁵

Such power struggles were possible because different individuals and institutions in Milošević's regime could operate with a considerable degree of autonomy. Vladislav Jovanović, Serbian Foreign Minister from 1991 to 1995, for example, recalls how when he was appointed he was not given any instructions from Milošević or written document on strategic aims, which indeed never existed throughout his time as minister.¹⁶ From an early stage Jovanović formulated key proposals completely independently.¹⁷ Particularly as the 1990s went on, Milošević also increasingly conducted key state affairs by himself, and visitors were often surprised to see that he appeared to be isolated, with no functioning staff around him. He generally met Croatian negotiator Hrvoje Šarinić alone, for example, with even Jovanović left to speculate privately about their discussions.¹⁸

A key reason for this isolation was that in 1994-95, as well as the increasing split between Belgrade and Serb hardliners in Bosnia and Croatia, which authors such as Barić and Caspersen have described, there was also an increasing split between Milošević and Serb hardliners in 'official Belgrade' itself. The MUP/DB, the army, and key parts of the government and the SPS (such as foreign minister Jovanović, and party stalwarts Jović, Kertes, Mihailo Marković, Brana Crnčević and Milorad Vučelić, who was also director of RTV Serbia) were all, to varying degrees, dissatisfied with

¹⁵ ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1423.E (Mladić Diary, 9/1/1994-21/3/1994), pp.113-5. See also: Perišić OTP Interviews and VSO transcripts, available in ICTY-Perišić, and various Mladić diary entries in ICTY-Tolimir, such as E-P1424 (Mladić diary, 31/3/1994-3/9/1994), pp.278, 285-6. And: Mihajlo Knežević, *Rat u Hrvatskoj iz pera obavještajaca* (Krajiski-Patrioti.com & KrajinaForce.com: 2009). Veljko Miladinović, 'Vodio DB, a radio za CIA', *PressOnline*, 11/11/2001. ICTY-Milošević: E-P677a (Report of Mladen Karan on MUP Serbia preventing work of the OB, autumn 1995).

¹⁶ Vladislav Jovanović, pp.30-31.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.58.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp.115, 214, 237.

Milošević's increasing moderation and distancing from the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, and even willing to openly oppose and subvert it.¹⁹ Milošević could speak much more freely without them, hence his preference to meet internationals and Šarinić alone.²⁰

Looking at this split in 1994-95 sheds essential light on Milošević's relationship with his supposed subordinates. Perišić told Mladić in September 1995 that 'Slobo does not have any kind of standing in the Serbian people' and 'does not like military men'; the police were 'mafiosi' and 'Slobo is even a bigger one'.²¹ He also noted that DB chief Jovica Stanišić 'does not like Slobo'; hardline RSK President Milan Martić had, similarly, described Stanišić that May as 'disappointed' and 'depressed' with Milošević, and the DB, whose power had grown exponentially in the 1990s, was especially emboldened in opposing the man who was technically its boss.²² In Eastern Slavonia, for example, where – as discussed in Chapter 8 - the DB was very influential, I have found three instances in 1995 of the DB and its associates directly opposing and subverting explicit instructions from Milošević himself, each over fundamental issues, including Milošević's orders to agree the region's reintegration with Croatia in November 1995. In each case, moreover, this obstruction was concealed from Milošević.²³ This disconnect was also found in some of the most fundamental aspects of Belgrade-RSK relations. For

¹⁹ See: Ibid. Šarinić. Borisav Jović, *Knjiga o Miloševiću* (Belgrade: Nikola Pasić, 2001. English translation by the ICTY: ICTY-Milošević: E-P596.3a). Robert Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), pp.157-8. ICTY-Perišić: E-P801-P817 (OTP Interviews Momčilo Perišić, 2003-2004). ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1425.E (Mladić Diary, 4/9/1994-28/1/1995), p.99; E-P1407.E (Mladić Diary, 27/1/1995-5/9/1995), p.208. ICTY-Gotovina(et al): E-P499.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 18/8/1995), p.8. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1276 (Minutes of a meeting between RSK and RS, 20/8/1994); Witness Ivor Roberts. Nenad Lj. Stefanović, 'Marković vs. Marković', *Vreme*, 10/10/1994, pp.16-18, in FBIS-EEU-94-209, 28/10/1994. Bahri Cani, 'Big Cadre Purge in SPS', *Nasa Borba*, 1/12/1995, in FBIS-EEU-95-233, 5/12/1995. Dragan Bujosević, 'Following Čičak's List', *NIN*, 1/12/1995, in FBIS-EEU-95-235, 17/5/1995.

²⁰ ICTY-Perišić: E-805.E (OTP Interview Momčilo Perišić, 18/12/2003), p.2. Holbrooke, pp.157-8.

²¹ ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1427.E (Mladić Diary, 28/8/1995-15/1/1996), pp.23-4.

²² Slobodan Jarčević, *Republika Srpska Krajina: državna dokumenta* (Belgrade: Miroslav, 2006), p.586. In addition to the following footnotes, see: ICTY-Stanišić-Simatović: D293 (DB Serbia, Official Note, 18/8/1995). 'Milošević i Stanišić', *NIN*, 20/6/2002. Marko Lopušina, 'Ključni svedok Haga', *Večernje Novosti online*, 15/9/2010. 'Perišić i Stanišić povezuju Mladića sa Amerikancima', *Politika Online*, 1/6/2010.

²³ ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović); E-P677a (Report of Mladen Karan on MUP Serbia preventing work of the OB, autumn 1995); E-P967a (OB report on situation in East Slavonia). ICTY-Perišić: E-P1370, P1309, P1344, P1357 (Intercepts involving Milošević, Perišić and Stanišić, 5/1995). Jarčević, p.583.

example, in 1995 Stanišić encouraged Martić to remove Milošević's main ally in the Krajina, the compromise-promoting Prime Minister Borislav Mikelić, urging Martić to persist in his hardline politics.²⁴ There is even evidence that Stanišić was behind Martić's rejection of the international community's 'Z-4 Plan' for Serb autonomy in Croatia in January 1995, which helped kill the negotiation process which Milošević had been promoting.²⁵

Much of this was probably hidden from Milošević (even though Stanišić's own phone was reportedly bugged).²⁶ He was certainly aware, however, of his hardliners' dissatisfaction with his shifting politics (though their positions were still usually closer to Milošević's than the Serb hardliners' in Bosnia and Croatia were). At the time Milošević was promoting a more ostensibly left-wing and anti-nationalist faction in his regime, the 'Yugoslav United Left' (*Jugoslovenska udružena levica*, JUL). He was moving gradually, however, and was not so powerful that he could purge large parts of his own regime without shaking its very foundations and threatening his own domestic position, as well as losing even further his capacity to influence the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs.

Because Milošević tended to favour the police as a key bastion of his rule in the 1990s, it has widely been assumed that he was particularly close with the MUP/DB apparatus.²⁷ Their relations in 1994-95 shows that this was not necessarily the case – and there is actually some convincing evidence suggesting that even in 1990-91 Stanišić and his associates were critical of Milošević and actively trying to get him to adopt a more hardline stance. In 1990 Stanišić was twice passed over for promotion to head of the DB, with Milošević instead appointing a party functionary, Zoran Janačković. Stanišić

²⁴ Ibid, pp.581-2, 588. E.V.N., 'Sve odlučila "mama"', *Večernje Novosti online*, 5/4/2003.

²⁵ Interview and email correspondence with Petar Ajdinović, RSK Assistant Defence Minister in 1995 (2011-12). Supported by: Interviews Borislav Mikelić, Slobodan Jarčević (Belgrade: 2007, 2011). ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Rade Rašeta; Mile Dakić. Mihajlo Knežević, p.195. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13783-4. ICTY-Perišić: E-P1342 (Intercept Milošević-Mikelić, 25/2/1995). Šarinić, p.219. Vlado Vurušić, 'Rusija je bila na strani Hrvatske', *Jutarnji List*, 17/2/2007.

²⁶ Jarčević, p.586.

²⁷ Gow, for example, gives considerable attention to differences between Milošević and the military, but regards the MUP/DB simply as his loyal 'Praetorian Guard'. Gow, *The Serbian Project*, pp.64-89.

clashed with Janačković and in spring 1991 the latter even formed a commission to investigate him, following allegations that he was leaking state secrets to a journalist to, as the journalist reported, 'prepare a situation to overthrow Milošević'. It was only in December 1991 that Stanišić was finally promoted to chief of the DB.²⁸ Leading DB official Dragan Filipović "Fića" has also recalled that in autumn 1990 Stanišić told him that there were still too many moderates 'in the Serbian political top and in our service', who gave Milošević 'wrong information' that 'the Krajina Serbs rebelled' in order to 'destabilise Serbia' and help the West, 'although to any fool it is clear that those people rose up against the political programme of the Croatian nationalist government'. In order to 'preserve the service from possible abuse', Stanišić emphasised, 'we must ourselves self-organise while Milošević and [our superiors] do not come to reason'.²⁹ Filipović explains the decision to form a permanent DB mission to the Krajina in spring 1991 as being because Milošević was being fed 'contradictory, imprecise information' which accused the Krajina Serbs of being 'anti-communists connected with extreme nationalists in Belgrade', information Milošević's party allies then confirmed. The DB aimed to correct this impression.³⁰ In addition, a series of intercepted conversations between Stanišić and Bosnian Serb leader Karadžić in December 1991-January 1992³¹ show that both then felt that recent developments meant that, as Stanišić said, 'now the entire strategy should be changed... completely'. Milošević's failure to realistically assess the situation was, Stanišić said, 'killing me'. Stanišić urged Karadžić to 'raise the people' and to 'convince [Milošević] of the things we discussed' – but 'in a way so that I am not shown as a part of the initiative'.³² Stanišić and influential former interior

²⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: D285-6, 288 (Reports of DB Commission investigating Stanišić, 1991); Witness Milorad Leković. Predrag Jeremić, 'Jovica Stanišić - Od izdajnika do ledenog spasioca', *Večernje Novosti online*, 25/2/2013.

²⁹ Dragan Filipović, *Anatomija Globalističkog Smrada* (Belgrade: Printmedia, 2008), p.36.

³⁰ Filipović, pp.48-9. Supported by: M. Šašić, 'Separatist Ideas from Croatia and Slovenia Cannot Hinder Yugoslavism', *Politika*, 23/8/1990, p.8, in FBIS-EEU-90-173, 6/9/1990.

³¹ Domovina Intercepts: B6967 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 21/12/1991); B6507 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 5/1/1992); B6510 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 6/1/1992); B6511 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 6/1/1992); B9112 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 12/1/1992). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P689, 690, 692 (Intercepts Karadžić-Stanišić, 22/1/1992, 28/1/1992). 'SDS Leader Calls For Serbian Federation', *Belgrade Radio*, 22/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-015, 23/1/1992.

³² Domovina Intercepts: B9112 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 12/1/1992); B6967 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 21/12/1991).

minister Radmilo Bogdanović were also sympathetic to Babić's demands to alter the Vance peace plan, rather than to accept it unconditionally as Milošević insisted.³³

Rather than being Milošević's puppets and the executors of his plans, the Serbian MUP/DB and their allies should more accurately be seen as a hardline faction within his regime which actively lobbied for an expansion of their role and for support to the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. They probably operated under broad mandates with a large degree of autonomy,³⁴ and even in 1990-91 may have worked to some degree contrary to, or without, Milošević's instructions.³⁵ The MUP/DB therefore cannot necessarily be assumed to have been operating on Milošević's orders, nor their actions necessarily used to determine his policy. This also applies to other components of Milošević's regime, such as the state media. Although Milošević formally and informally had a significant degree of control over such sectors of his regime, its various components seem to have operated fairly autonomously, and were capable of influencing Milošević as well as being influenced by him.

The distance between Milošević and Stanišić in 1990-91 also makes it highly unlikely that in autumn 1990 Milošević had in the DB a loyal apparatus that he was willing to order to conduct criminal and terrorist acts to destabilise Croatia, as alleged by Babić and the OTP, and Dragan Tanasić (discussed later). Finally, Milošević's relationship with the DB and other sectors of his own regime, particularly in 1994-95, clearly indicates the limits of Milošević's knowledge, perceptions, powers and political abilities. It should encourage us to move away from the view of Milošević as a master manipulator and strategist, and towards a much more measured assessment of

³³ Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo* (Belgrade: Srpska Radikalna Stranka, 2010), pp.260-1, 364-5. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P404 (Interview with Radmilo Bogdanović, *Duga*, 12/2/1993). Domovina Intercept: B9112 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 12/1/1992).

³⁴ Suggested by, for example: ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.18 (Babić Interview), pp.37-41. Domovina Intercept: B6570 (Karadžić-Kertes, 24/6/1991).

³⁵ Filipović himself describes several occasions, beginning already in mid-1991, of him deliberately misinforming Belgrade on what was going on in Croatia and Bosnia, in line with his sympathies for the Serb nationalists there. Filipović, pp.52-3, 58-9.

Milošević's goals, strategies and capacity to influence developments in the former Yugoslavia.

The Serbian 'Attack' on Croatia

In early 1989, after the main goals of the Serbian protest movement had been met, some of its supporters, including Kertes, made aggressive statements that they would now be targeting Croatia, Slovenia and others, and overthrowing their governments too.³⁶ And in 1989 the first Serbian nationalist protests did take place in Knin, Croatia, with a small group of radicals from Serbia playing a prominent role in disturbances in July 1989. Many authors connect these developments, seeing them as the next step in Milošević's anti-bureaucratic revolution.³⁷

It is certainly true that these early Serbian nationalist activities in Croatia met with the sympathy or support of the Serbian authorities, particularly through the media (as explored in Chapter 6). In the late 1980s the official Serbian media adopted an increasingly nationalist and critical perspective towards Croatia (the 'Memorandum' perspective), and was opened up to Serbian nationalists, including those from Croatia. There were also signs of the Serbian leadership opening the question of the Serbs over the Drina,³⁸ and in late 1989 some leading Serbian officials even suggested that an autonomous province of Serbs could be formed in Croatia (partly as a response to complaints that the existence of Serbia's provinces gave Serbia extra votes on the federal level).³⁹ Milošević, in this period, was probably counting on Croatian (and

³⁶ Vlado Rajic, 'Novi stari ljudi', *Danas*, 28/3/1989, pp.20-21.

³⁷ For example: Tanner, pp.218-9. Gagnon, pp.80-3. Bennett, p.125. Cviic, p.208. Miloš Vasić & Filip Švarn, 'Paramilitary Formations in Serbia: 1990-2000', in *Helsinki Files: In the Triangle of the State Power - Army, Police, Paramilitary Units*, (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee, 2001), p.43.

³⁸ See: Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, p.339. Nita Luci & Predrag Marković, 'Events and Sites of Difference: Mark-ing Self and Other in Kosovo', in Kolstø (ed), p.90. D. Vucinic et al, 'Discussion of Inter-Ethnic Relations', *Borba*, 31/7/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-151, 8/8/1989. 'Further on Meeting', *Tanjug*, 12/1/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-030, 13/2/1990. Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani* (ICTY translation), p.48.

³⁹ Marinko Čulić, 'Nešto između', *Danas*, 12/12/1989, pp.22-3. 'Pokrajine', *Danas*, 19/12/1989, pp.30-31. 'Vojvodina President on Provinces' Position', Belgrade Domestic Service, 19/11/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-218, 14/11/1989.

Bosnian) Serbs to help secure him a majority at the Yugoslav level for his proposed reforms of Yugoslavia, and splitting them off from Zagreb and Sarajevo would aid this.⁴⁰ But evidence is lacking for more radical and far-reaching plans: to overthrow the Croatian government, deliberately stoke Croat-Serb conflict, or support 'Greater Serbian' aims with regard to Croatia. Serbian nationalist activists in Croatia in 1989 developed autonomously from official Belgrade (as detailed in Chapter 6), and Serbia's nationalist stance towards Croatia can be at least partly explained by Milošević's confrontational political style and domestic political motivations.⁴¹ Milošević's strategy at the time was 'full democracy for the Serbian intelligentsia, in nonpartisan pluralism. So that they do not attack us too much', and the status of Serbs outside Serbia was a theme of the intelligentsia that went back years.⁴²

As a parallel, Bosnia and Sandžak (a Muslim-inhabited region within Serbia and Montenegro) received similar treatment in the Serbian media to Croatia at the time (and the Bosnian leadership also had to contend with Milošević's arrogant and belligerent behaviour),⁴³ such that in July 1990 even Karadžić was disassociating himself from the Belgrade media's anti-Muslim coverage.⁴⁴ But as late as a year after this, Milošević was counting on a Serb-Muslim alliance in favour of Yugoslavia, not war with the Muslims or a partition of Bosnia (let alone Sandžak), and was urging Karadžić to ally with pro-Yugoslav Muslims accordingly.⁴⁵ It seems, then, that Milošević's exploitation of Serbian

⁴⁰ See, for example: Andjelic, p.103-13. Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, p.349.

⁴¹ On Milošević's political style see: Borisav Jović, *Knjiga o Miloševiću* (ICTY translation), p.8.

⁴² Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani* (ICTY translation), p.54. See, for example: 'Predlog za upostavljanje stvarne ravnopravnosti naroda Jugoslavije', Belgrade, 12/2/1988, in Aleksa Đilas (ed), *Srpsko pitanje* (Belgrade: Politika, 1991), pp.275-81.

⁴³ See: Andjelic, pp.103-13. Donia, *Karadžić*, pp.46-7. Milan Andrejevich, 'The Sandzak: A Perspective of Serb-Muslim Relations' in Hugh Poulton & Suha Taji-Farouki (eds), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State* (London: Hurst. & Company, 1997), pp.178-81. 'Together We Are Strong, Divided We Don't Have a Chance', *Borba*, 20/7/1989, p.4, in FBIS-EEU-89-142, 26/7/1989. E.D. 'Are We Disconnected With POLITIKA's Policy?', *Borba*, 24/11/1989, p.5, in FBIS-EEU-89-231, 24/11/1989. Željko Vuković, 'The Logic of National Colours', *Borba*, 18/11/1989, p.4, in FBIS-EEU-89-227, 28/11/1989. So did the Macedonians: Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp.43-4.

⁴⁴ Milorad Vučelić, 'Serbs in Bosnia', *NIN*, 20/7/1990, pp.24-6, in FBIS-EER-90-129, 17/9/1990.

⁴⁵ Domovina Intercepts: B6518/B6520 (Karadžić-Milošević, 29/5/1991); B6628 (Karadžić-Milošević, 31/7/1991); B6846 (Karadžić-Milošević, 24/10/1991). Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.302.

nationalism for domestic purposes may have run counter to his actual political objectives concerning Yugoslavia.

In addition, the mushrooming of nationalism in the media and society seems to have had a momentum of its own, capable of leading and influencing as much as following official Serbian politics. To mix some popular metaphors, this was a tiger that the Serbian leadership had agreed to ride, rather than a tap that they could turn on and off at will.⁴⁶ Milošević in the late 1980s had built his popularity and key bases of his political support on his role as a defender of Serbs and Serbian national interests – at first as defined by the Serbian communist party, but later as widely conceived by the Serbian intelligentsia, the media and society in general. It was only logical that this position should then evolve into a perceived defence of Serbian interests not just in Kosovo/Serbia but also Yugoslavia as a whole, including in Croatia and Bosnia. Rather than there being a conscious decision to open the question of the Serbs over the Drina, then, this was just the logical continuation of Milošević's policy of defending Serbian national interests, interests which Milošević himself played only a limited role in defining.⁴⁷

Yugoslavia or a 'Reduced' Yugoslavia?

From an early stage the Serbian leadership saw the status of Serbs, and 'Serbian lands', outside Serbia as a key issue in a potential disintegration of Yugoslavia. In July 1989, for example, Jović wrote that if Yugoslavia fell apart 'a large part of the Serb population could end up beyond the borders of Serbia, unless they opted for another solution

⁴⁶ EC negotiator David Owen 'often likened [Milošević] to someone who has jumped on to the tiger of nationalism and is finding it difficult to get off again without the tiger eating him.' David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (London: Indigo, 1996), p.137.

⁴⁷ Serbian intellectuals' understandings of Serbian national interests in the 1980s can be found in, among others: Dragović-Soso. Aleksandar Pavković, 'Yugoslavism's Last Stand'. Mihailović & Krestić. Conceptions of Serbian national interests in earlier times can be found in, among others: Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (London: Cornell University Press, 1984). Nicholas J. Miller, *Between Nation and State: Serbian Politics in Croatia Before the First World War* (Pittsburgh, P.A.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997). Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: C Hurst & Co, 2007)

through the use of force.' He feared 'genocide against the Serbs if they become national minorities, especially in Croatia', noting that 'The Serb question is not an easy one. There is an enormous risk of civil war over a reallocation of territory.'⁴⁸ A confederation was, from the start, rejected for this reason, as it would divide Serbs between a number of different independent states.⁴⁹

At the time, however, Jović concluded that this was why the preservation of federal Yugoslavia was in the fundamental interest of the Serbs, and the available evidence suggests that this was then the Serbian leadership's favoured option (along with a strengthening of the federal centre).⁵⁰ For example, whereas in 1990-91 the Serbian leadership acknowledged Slovenia's right to secede and even advocated that it implement that right, in 1989 Serbia was actively opposing such moves, including in September 1989 advocating JNA intervention to prevent Slovene amendments asserting its sovereignty.⁵¹ Milošević placed his hopes on winning majority support for his platform at the 14th party congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ), scheduled for January 1990.⁵² Jović noted that the goal was 'to preserve the integrity of the SKJ and democratic centralism,' and 'to isolate the Slovenes, to keep Croatia and Macedonia and possibly Bosnia-Herzegovina as well from joining them.'⁵³ Milošević, indeed, lobbied the Croats to stay at the Congress after the Slovenes walked out.⁵⁴

Serbia's plans at this Congress failed, as the Croats joined the Slovenes in departing. As Sell and Dejan Jović have noted, and Milošević himself confirmed in The Hague, it was over the following months that Serbia's policy shifted, recognising the increased desire for a confederation or independence in Slovenia and Croatia, and resolving not to insist

⁴⁸ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.74.

⁵⁰ See, for example: 'Together We Are Strong, Divided We Don't Have a Chance', *Borba*, 20/7/1989, p.4, in FBIS-EEU-89-142, 26/7/1989.

⁵¹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.40-51, 121. Momir Bulatović, *Pravila ćutanja* (Belgrade: Zograf, 2005), p.44.

⁵² Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.332-3, 339-41.

⁵³ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.79. Also: *Ibid*, p.121. Borisav Jović, *Knjiga o Miloševiću* (ICTY translation), pp.58-60.

⁵⁴ LeBor, p.134.

on preserving Yugoslavia as a whole, but to allow others to secede if they wished - so long as 'Serbian territories' in Croatia and Bosnia had the right to decide on their fate.⁵⁵ When Dobrica Ćosić first met Milošević in March 1990, he found him a firm advocate of a Yugoslav federation 'as the vital interest of the Serbian nation', rejecting any separation and arguing that 'Yugoslav nations are together, they have the same language, they are inter-mixed, those nations are the same'.⁵⁶ On 21 March Milošević was talking about forming a 'Yugoslav United Socialist Democratic Party' with pro-Yugoslav communists from Croatia and Macedonia, and he and Jović both noted their strong disagreement with Ćosić's idea that it was 'not worth fighting for [Yugoslavia's] survival'.⁵⁷ On 26 March, however, the 'coordinating committee' of Serbia's state leadership assessed that Yugoslavia's disintegration appeared 'unstoppable', and thus 'Serbia will pursue a sincere policy aimed at the survival of a federal Yugoslavia but will also prepare to live without Yugoslavia'. Serbia would 'not agree to a confederation' – it would only be acceptable if there was 'a contractual guarantee of the rights of the Serbian nation in other Yugoslav states', which was 'unfeasible' and would only be granted as a trick. Beyond the Drina, therefore, 'war will be unavoidable', including a bloody 'struggle for territory' in Bosnia, 'as a result of the refusal of the Serb nation in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to agree to... its separation from the motherland and transformation into a national minority'.⁵⁸ Rights for Serbs in other republics within a confederation was thus firmly rejected, in favour of acceptance of 'inevitable' conflict.

The victory of pro-independence parties in the elections in Slovenia and Croatia was the final nail in the coffin of any Serbian expectations of preserving Yugoslavia as a whole.⁵⁹ In late June 1990 Milošević publicly stated that 'a confederation is not a state, but a union of independent states, so there can be no confederation... with the existing administratively established borders' – in that case, 'the question of Serbian borders is an

⁵⁵ Sell, pp.108-10. Dejan Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.358-60. ICTY-Milošević: T29388.

⁵⁶ Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, p.142.

⁵⁷ Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani* (ICTY translation), pp.111-2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.117. ICTY-Milošević: T29377.

⁵⁹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.127-8, 130, 134.

open political question'.⁶⁰ At the same time, Jović wrote that 'Slovenia and Croatia are working very intensively on creating independent states', and would soon make concrete steps in that direction. He therefore noted that:

*my preference would be to forcibly expel them from Yugoslavia, by simply drawing borders and declaring that they have brought this upon themselves through their decisions, but I do not know what we should do with the Serbs in Croatia. I am not for the use of force; rather, I would like to present to them a fait accompli. We should come up with a course of action in this direction, with a variant of holding a referendum before the final expulsion, on the basis of which it would be decided where to place the borders.*⁶¹

Milošević agreed, and thereafter both he and Jović advocated a number of times that the JNA withdraw from Slovenia and Croatia, to the borders of 'Serbian' territories in Croatia.

'Greater Serbia'

There is no single definition for the term 'Greater Serbia'. The most famous concrete proposals for a 'Greater Serbia', as advocated by, for example, Serbian radical Vojislav Šešelj in the 1990s, claimed everything east of the line Virovitica-Karlovac-Karlobag – thus, the whole of Bosnia and two-thirds of Croatia.⁶² However, the term 'Greater Serbia' is also generally used to refer to any expansion of Serbia beyond its 1945 borders, as the term 'Greater Croatia' is commonly used to refer to any expansion of Croatian borders, rather than just the most famous 'Greater Croatian' project, incorporating the whole of Bosnia into Croatia.

Technically, Milošević did not advocate any 'Greater Serbia', as he did not support changing Serbia's borders, but rather the establishment of a Serbian entity in Croatia

⁶⁰ 'Milošević on New Constitution', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 25/6/1990, in, FBIS-EEU-90-123, 26/6/1990.

⁶¹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.143-4.

⁶² ICTY-Milošević: Witness Vojislav Šešelj. Jozo Tomasevich, *The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp.167-171. For nineteenth century concepts see: Banac, *op. cit.*, pp.79-85.

which would 'remain' in a Yugoslav federation. Even if only 'Serbian' entities (Serbia, Montenegro, and the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs) remained in that 'Yugoslavia', Milošević still preferred to retain the Yugoslav name, and the form of a federation, rather than an enlarged Serbian state. As, for example, then Federal Prime Minister Ante Marković recalls: Milošević never advocated 'a Great Serbia. Never. He always advocated Yugoslavia.'⁶³ The only time Milošević used the term 'Greater Serbia', indeed, was when he was rejecting that concept or denying that he supported it.⁶⁴

Of course, the project of Serbian secession from Croatia was still fundamentally about determining what were 'Serb lands' outside of Serbia and securing their remaining in a wider state with other 'Serb lands'. In this sense, it is not unreasonable to characterise Milošević's goals as 'Greater Serbian' - but it is more terminologically accurate to describe his goal as a 'reduced' or 'residual' Yugoslavia.

'Yugoslavia Exists'

From the spring/summer of 1990 onwards, the Serbian leadership was no longer an advocate or defender of Yugoslavia in its existing international borders, but instead envisaged a 'reduced' Yugoslavia, excluding the Croats and Slovenes, and perhaps others. In some respects, the Serbs would have preferred the Croats and Slovenes to simply declare their secession – the crisis would be expedited, they would be viewed as separatists, and the Serbs and the JNA could then quickly determine the new borders and form their new, 'reduced' Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ At the same time, however, the Serbs strongly opposed and condemned unconstitutional actions by Slovenia and Croatia in their moves to separation. This is sometimes pictured as deceptive posturing, given what we know about Serbian intentions.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ante Marković, 'Moja istina o smrti Jugoslavije, razgovori s Gordanom Malićem', *Danas* (Belgrade), 13-28/11/2003, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.cpi.hr/download/links/en/7917.doc.

⁶⁴ The only exception to this, as pointed to by Prelec, was when Milošević was touting the merits of various peace plans for Bosnia, and quoted favourably foreign criticisms that they meant the creation of a 'Great Serbia', i.e. that the plans were favourable to Serbs. Marko Prelec, p.372.

⁶⁵ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.142-4, 229.

⁶⁶ For example: Sell, p.127. Gagnon, pp.92-3.

However, even though Serbia did not expect Yugoslavia to survive intact it was nevertheless trying to prevent the wider, complete disintegration of the state. A key Serbian slogan in this period was that 'Yugoslavia exists', and the Serbian leadership was trying to oppose the republicanisation of the crisis.⁶⁷ If Yugoslavia de facto became (and was viewed internationally as) simply a set of separate republics without any functioning federal centre, then the confederal argument would have won, and any move to then change the republican borders would have seemed more problematic. It was also essential to the Serbs that they were not seen to be breaking up Yugoslavia or striving for any 'Greater Serbia', but rather the Slovenes and Croats, and anyone else who wanted independence, was separatist, with the Serbs merely opting to oppose secession and 'remain' in the existing common state.⁶⁸ This would also enable the legitimate deployment of the JNA to achieve these goals, and for Serbia to inherit this army.⁶⁹ It was thus, the Serbian leaders believed, absolutely essential to maintain continuity between the internationally recognised state of Yugoslavia, and whatever 'reduced' Yugoslavia they ended up creating.

The Serbs therefore always insisted that secession had to be implemented in a constitutional manner, and through federal bodies.⁷⁰ This was also because they wanted to thereby ensure that their understanding of the right to self-determination – that it belonged to nations, not republics – be accepted, rather than the republics, such as Croatia, seceding and presenting republican borders as a *fait accompli*.⁷¹

⁶⁷ ICTY-Milošević: E-P469.5 (Tanjug, 15/1/1991); E-P397.1 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #1, 11/10-1991-18/10/1991), pp.69-70. Zimmerman, p.249.

⁶⁸ See, for example: Domovina Intercepts: B6580 (Karadžić-Milošević, 1/7/1991); B6984 (Karadžić-Milošević, 30/12/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 12/4/1991).

⁶⁹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.344, 346. Domovina Intercepts: B6584 (Karadžić-Brdanin, 2/7/1991); B6957 (Milošević-Karadžić, 9/7/1991). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Borisav Jović, T29279.

⁷⁰ From summer 1990, indeed, the Serbs repeatedly told the Slovenes they could secede if they wished – but in a constitutional manner. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.154, 289, 298, 315. Janez Drnovšek, *Escape from Hell: The Truth of a President* (Ljubljana: Delo, 1996), p.205. Zimmerman, p.145. ICTY-Milošević: E-P397.1 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #1, 11/10-1991-18/10/1991), p.50; Witness Milan Kučan, T20894. BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, p.10. Silber & Little, pp.113-4. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1102.E (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 22/11/1991); E-1424.E (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 12/7/1991), pp.44-5, 145. 'Milošević's Address to Serbian Assembly', *Belgrade Radio*, 5/6/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-109, 6/6/1991.

⁷¹ For debates on rights to self-determination in Yugoslav constitutions see: Audrey Budding, 'Nation/People/Republic: Self-Determination in Socialist Yugoslavia', in Cohen & Dragović-Soso

Of course, Serbia did take many actions in 1990-91, and earlier, that contributed to the republicanisation of Yugoslavia, most notably its economic boycott of Slovenia and sustained campaign against Marković's federal government. Serbia's leaders were nationalist and narrow-minded, intolerant of opposition and not prone to compromise, all of which was uncondusive to the survival of the fragile multinational state of Yugoslavia. But it is important to understand actors' intentions at the time, and the Serbian leadership was, however hypocritically, trying to preserve Yugoslavia as a legal and functioning state, despite anticipating the final outcome as a 'reduced' Yugoslavia.

(eds), pp.91-130.

4.2. Serbian Strategy Towards Croatia, 1990-91

Imposing a Solution: The Secession of 'Serbian Territories' from Croatia

Serbia supported a hardline policy towards Croatia: if Croatia did not agree to remain in a (somewhat strengthened) federation, then it should be allowed to secede, with the condition that Serbs in Croatia have the same right. The Serbian leadership completely rejected the idea of a confederation, which it equated (as, in fact, did its architects) with the disintegration of Yugoslavia into separate independent states.⁷² Milošević and Jović never showed much interest in finding a compromise between the confederal and federal proposals, preferring to impose their solutions from a position of strength - by out-voting in Yugoslav institutions and getting the support of the JNA.

Tuđman and his colleagues were viewed in Belgrade as anti-Serb and pro-Ustaša.⁷³ Belgrade showed no interest in exploring a solution for Serbs within an independent Croatia – an option explicitly rejected in the leadership's conclusions of March 1990 – and also had little faith that Croatia would ever agree to Serb self-determination. It was not felt, therefore, that there was much point negotiating with the Croats. For example, in August and October 1990, after the major instances of Serb unrest in Croatia, Tuđman had proposed talks with Milošević. On the second occasion Milošević does seem to have been interested, but both times he declined on the advice of Jović, who argued that such talks would only be exploited to the detriment of Serbs in Croatia, and that talks must be held in Yugoslav institutions.⁷⁴

Numerous sources confirm that Milošević advocated dealing with the Croats from a position of strength, even if that meant war. For example, in a discussion with a large

⁷² Interview Slaven Letica, principal advisor to President Tuđman, 1990-1 (Zagreb: 7-8/10/2009). Dejan Jović, 'The Slovenian-Croatian Confederal Proposal'.

⁷³ For example: Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.164, 181.

⁷⁴ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.164, 181.

group of Serbian intellectuals and politicians with Milošević in late 1990, Rašković had advocated his idea of a pacifist and anti-war approach, including a mass, peaceful Serb march on Zagreb. Everyone except Čosić rejected the idea as impractical: 'the others believed that whoever is stronger determines the borders. And since we are stronger than the Croats, we will determine the borders.'⁷⁵ Rašković's daughter also recalls him telling Milošević that war would bring no good and borders were always settled in negotiations, to which Milošević responded that borders were always drawn by military boots.⁷⁶ And as Jović noted in January 1991, '[Milošević] does not believe that any agreement can be reached' in talks with the Croats and 'has more faith in actions that will force them into settling with us.'⁷⁷ As Milošević famously told Serbian mayors in March 1991: 'borders are always decided upon by the strong, never the weak', and although he hoped the Croats 'will not be insane enough to fight us', 'if we need to fight, by God we shall fight'.⁷⁸

The proposal to 'cut off' Croatia and Slovenia, discussed by Milošević and Jović a number of times from June 1990 onwards, was hardline, precluded negotiations, and would undoubtedly have led to some conflict, as Milošević himself predicted.⁷⁹ At the same time, however, it should be acknowledged that this proposal was not to conquer and defeat Croatia, but merely to withdraw the JNA to certain areas and hold those lines. Like the proposal of Croatian Defence Minister Martin Špegelj to storm JNA garrisons in Croatia, the withdrawal proposal actually aimed at avoiding a larger and more substantial war - and avoiding defeat - by striking early. However, these proposals were not implemented: they depended on the JNA carrying them out, and the JNA rejected them.

⁷⁵ Đukić, *op. cit.*, p.171. Čosić himself recalled the idea as 'naïve'. Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, p.140.

⁷⁶ Jovan Kesar, 'Jovan Rašković', *Večernji Novosti*, 5/9/2007, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.krajinaforce.com, p.4.

⁷⁷ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.234.

⁷⁸ ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 12/4/1991).

⁷⁹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.195.

Negotiating Serb Secession

Although Milošević and Jović felt that there was little chance of the Croats willingly accepting Serbian self-determination, often advocating that the JNA impose this solution militarily, it is worth noting that they were also simultaneously pursuing a political approach to resolve the situation in Croatia - for example, by advocating laws that would regulate the self-determination of each nation, both Croatian and Serbian.⁸⁰ Internal comments and assessments by both Milošević and Jović reveal that they had not, in fact, decided on war as the only way to resolve matters but, on the contrary, often had some faith in the success of this political course.

A diary entry by Jović in January 1991 sheds particular light on this. With the Croats now much better armed and organised, Jović concluded that the proposal to 'cut off' Croatia and Slovenia was no longer feasible: the JNA had not 'withdrawn to new positions in time', and thus war would result if it was attempted. This war could 'last a very long time, and its outcome cannot be predicted in advance.' On the other hand, Jović was 'less afraid of the 'labyrinth' of a peaceful course of events', and felt that the Serbs should strive for a peaceful and favourable solution to the Yugoslav crisis, using their alliance with the army and their support for democratic referenda. If the Croats imposed war, however, as appeared likely, then they would 'defend [themselves]' and the 'Serb nation' in Croatia 'which does not want to leave Yugoslavia by force.'⁸¹

At this stage, Milošević and Jović were in disagreement on this point, with Milošević still advocating withdrawal to new borders, but it is interesting to note Jović's conclusions. They indicate that he felt that force was not, in fact, the only way to

⁸⁰ See, for example: Ibid, pp.127-8, 130, 134. ICTY-Milošević: E-P352.1a (Minutes of SNV, 16/8/1990). 'Presidency Proposes Formal Secession Law', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 23/6/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-122, 25/6/1990. 'SFRY Presidency Issues Statement', *Tanjug*, 6/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-131, 9/7/1990. 'Federal, Serbian Presidencies Meet', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 9/7/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-132, 10/7/1990. 'Serbian Presidency's Letter to Federal Presidency', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 19/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1991. Aleksandar Milošević, 'Jović's Recipe', *Vjesnik*, 13/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-182, 19/9/1990. 'Milošević Proposes Plan for Crisis Resolution', *Tanjug*, 30/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-104, 30/5/1991.

⁸¹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.234-5.

impose the solution of Serbian territorial self-determination on the Croats, and that a major conflict could still be avoided. Such a scenario was not completely inconceivable: Zagreb could, for example, have de facto lost authority over Serbian regions but declined to launch military operations to regain them, due to the threat of JNA intervention and/or international condemnation.

It is important to understand how the actors viewed the situation at the time. Even if we assess that their hardline politics would definitely have led to a major war, it does not necessarily follow that those actors had 'decided on war',⁸² or considered it the only way in which they could achieve their goals. Indeed, intercepted conversations show that as late as the end of June 1991 Milošević was still talking about getting the Croats and Slovenes to return to the federal assembly and agree a procedure for peaceful secession, while in September 1991 he thought that the Americans would accept a 'reduced' Yugoslavia including the Serbs in Croatia.⁸³

In addition, in summer and autumn 1991 there was a shift in Belgrade's thinking towards Croatia that increased the perceived likelihood that others – the international community, and perhaps even, begrudgingly, Zagreb - could accept Serbia's proposals. In mid-1991 Milošević advisor Smilja Avramov, a member of Serbia's 'expert team' for discussions with Zagreb (discussed later), formulated a compromise proposal of sorts with regard to the Croatian Serbs. As well as full self-determination and remaining in a 'reduced' Yugoslavia, this document mentioned a second option: a transitional period in which the Krajinas would be 'granted the status of independent territories retaining certain ties with Croatia on the one hand and Yugoslavia on the other', guaranteed by the international community (the EC). These territories would be autonomous and self-governing, with their own police force, and demilitarised. As Croatia progressively left Yugoslavia and suspended those ties, so these territories would progressively suspend their ties with Croatia. It was noted that most likely only some economic links would

⁸² LeBor, p.139.

⁸³ Domovina Intercepts: B6558 (Karadžić-Milošević, 17/6/1991); B6672/B6959 (Karadžić-Milošević, 6/9/1991). ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P395.B.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 28/6/1991); E-P64.A.150.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Cvjetkovic, 19/6/1991). Also see: Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.159.

remain, where the laws of both Croatia and Yugoslavia would still apply. A mixed Krajina/Croatia/Yugoslavia/international community commission would deal with areas of dispute. In areas where the territories had not passed their own legislation, Yugoslav legislation would apply, and as Croatia left Yugoslavia the territories would 'become increasingly institutionalised federal units of Yugoslavia'.⁸⁴

This idea was revived on 29 September 1991, when the EC's Conference on Yugoslavia was getting underway and Milošević proposed to EC negotiator Henry Wijnaendts that the Serbs in Croatia acquire a 'special status'.⁸⁵ Wijnaendts liked the idea and it was thence adopted by EC negotiators. The version of 'special status' that the EC developed over the following weeks was for Serbian autonomy and minority rights within Croatia. Serbia's was for de facto independence, and Belgrade seems to have envisaged this 'special status' as technically being on Yugoslav territory, sometimes also mentioning the right of the local population to have the final say on their fate. There was also major disagreement about what territory was involved. Ultimately, the EC did not accept Serbia's concept of 'special status', and this was one reason for Serbia's rejection of the EC's Hague proposals of 18 October 1991.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ ICTY-Milošević: E-D243a ('Options for Serbs the Future Status of the Present Serbian Territories in Croatia'). The date of this document is somewhat unclear – Avramov said June 1991; the document is actually dated July; and it refers to the 'Belgrade Initiative', placing it after 14 August 1991. Perhaps it went through several drafts.

⁸⁵ Henry Wijnaendts, *Joegoslavische kroniek, juli 1991 – augustus 1992* (Amsterdam: Rap, 1993), pp.124-5. Caplan, pp.33-4.

⁸⁶ See: Wijnaendts, 137-8. Avramov, pp.272, 277. Domovina Intercepts: B6854 (Karadžić-Milošević, 29/10/1991); C2397 (Karadžić-Milošević, 1/11/1991). Stipe Mesić, *The Demise of Yugoslavia: A Political Memoir* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), p.372. Avramov, pp.273-81. Živko Juzbašić, *Srpsko pitanje i hrvatska politika – svjedočanstva i dokumenti 1990-2000* (Zagreb: VBZ, 2009), pp.115-6. Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, *Diplomacy on the Edge: Containment of Ethnic Conflict and the Minorities Working Group of the Conferences on Yugoslavia* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, 2007), p.127. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Geert Ahrens, T7663. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P356.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić, 10/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-P777-9, 812 (Official Reports on Conference on Yugoslavia); E-P397.1 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #1, 11/10-1991-18/10/1991), pp.23-5. 38-9, 43, 46, 65, 69-71; E-676.1a (Assembly of Serbia, 12/12/1991), p.41. 'Jovanović Interviewed on Talks', *Belgrade RTV*, 9/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-197, 10/10/1991. 'Presidency Accepts Special Status for Croat Serbs', *Tanjug*, 1/11/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-213, 4/11/1991.

However, Serbia had hoped that its ideas would be accepted by the EC, and until the final rejection of the agreement tried to adopt a co-operative approach to their proposals. As Jović noted in mid-September 1991, at the very beginning of the war proper in Croatia, 'negotiations and preparing for war are parallel processes',⁸⁷ while Milošević said privately at the time that 'of course, co-operation with Europe is crucial, and whenever they are well intended we will accept their offer'.⁸⁸ Indeed, immediately before the EC's final proposals were unveiled Milošević and Jović had discussed with the Montenegrin leadership making a radical peace proposal and solving the Serbs in Croatia via international protection, and this was conveyed to Croatian Serb leaders and Zagreb, too.⁸⁹ These ideas ultimately led to the Vance plan at the end of 1991, whereby the JNA withdrew from the Krajinas, which came under UN protection, were self-governing and, in theory, had an undetermined status.

There is a tendency to view Serbia as fighting against Croatia and the whole world in pursuit of its extreme objectives. Yet Serbia was pursuing a political course at the same time as advocating military solutions, and actually developing concrete proposals in this respect. Ultimately, Milošević and Jović had little faith that Zagreb would ever willingly agree to their proposals, but war was not seen as the only way in which Croatia could be induced to accept them, and it is, I believe, important to recognise this.

The Karadžorđevo Myth

In early 1991 Milošević had agreed to a third proposal from Zagreb for Serbia-Croatia negotiations, and on 25 March 1991 Tuđman and Milošević had their famous, closed meeting in Karadžorđevo, Serbia. This was followed by a second meeting in Tikveš, Croatia, on 15 April 1991, and the establishing of Croatian and Serbian expert teams, which met three times in April.

⁸⁷ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.342.

⁸⁸ Domovina Intercept: C2352/B8409 (Karadžić-Milošević, 10/9/1991).

⁸⁹ Bulatović, *Pravila ćutanja*, p.68. Tomac, p.327. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T9701-3. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13195-7.

There is considerable mythology surrounding the meeting in Karadorđevo and its follow-ups. Here, I will focus on the idea, promoted by a number of Tuđman's former colleagues (including Šarinić, Mesić, Boljkovac and Špegelj) and wholly or partially supported by authors such as Minić, Kovačević and Viro, that at Karadorđevo Milošević made some grand promises to Tuđman, revealing either that Milošević was cynically using Krajina to start a war, intending to abandon it all along, or Milošević's duplicity and aggressive intentions.

Tuđman never told colleagues precisely what he discussed with Milošević at Karadorđevo.⁹⁰ But he was 'highly optimistic' after the meeting, saying that he and Milošević had agreed 'in principle' about the problems between Croatia and Serbia, which would partly be resolved through Bosnia, and that 'I think we will find a common language with Milošević and solve the problems'.⁹¹ Three days later, however, he and Milošević openly clashed at a summit of republican presidents in Split, as Tuđman directly challenged Milošević about the 'terrorists' in Knin, demanding to know, 'to clear the air here with the present Mr. Milošević, and also with the army... do they stand behind them?'.⁹² Milošević, however, denied that they were 'terrorists' and supported Krajina's right to a referendum (on self-determination), the two then quarrelling over this. On 31 March, meanwhile, the first deaths of the war occurred in clashes in Plitvice, Korenica, when Croatian forces ejected Krajina units sent there by Babić, following which Babić declared Krajina's unification with Serbia. At a meeting of the Croatian leadership on 1 April Tuđman then spoke 'very sharply' about Milošević: 'Milošević one-to-one was for a peaceful solution, but then in Split he postured as the leader of all Serbs in Yugoslavia and activated them, and now we have strengthened activity of Serbs in the whole of Yugoslavia!'⁹³

⁹⁰ Manolić, p.317.

⁹¹ ICTY-Prlić(et al): Witness Josip Manolić, T4673. ICTY-Milošević: P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić). Bilandžić, pp.372, 376.

⁹² Momir Bulatović, *Neizgovorena odbrana: ICTY vs Slobodan Milošević* (Nis: Zograf, 2006), p.68.

⁹³ ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić).

According to Tuđman's chief of staff Hrvoje Šarinić, Karađorđevo's follow-up in Tikveš on 15 April was supposed to focus on more concrete problems, with Tuđman planning to insist on resolving Croatia first, before any discussions on Bosnia. Tuđman, Šarinić recalls, was 'far less optimistic' and 'more realistic' after that meeting.⁹⁴ The meetings of experts also brought no results, and were suspended at the end of the April.⁹⁵ After clashes in Borovo Selo in early May, Tuđman then officially suspended dialogue with Serbia, although expressing hope that 'the Serbs will finally be forced to open dialogue and seek a solution that suits everybody'.⁹⁶ In June further talks were held, including two trilateral meetings with Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović, and there were some further contacts between Croatian and Serbian experts. Again, however, they ended without agreement.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, Tuđman continued to argue that the solution to Croat-Serb relations lay in a negotiated settlement with Serbia at the expense of Bosnia, advocating this to internationals as well as the Serbs and Izetbegović.⁹⁸ Although often harshly critical of Milošević,⁹⁹ he also regularly seemed to naively discern in minor concessions a willingness to compromise, and expressed great optimism that a solution would be reached.¹⁰⁰ This has led some to suspect that Milošević was making secret (and false) promises to Tuđman regarding Krajina.

⁹⁴ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Hrvoje Šarinić, T31266; E-P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić);

⁹⁵ Bilandžić, pp.372-7. Avramov, pp.140-1. ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Kosta Mihajlovic, T34764-6; Ratko Marković, T35380-6.

⁹⁶ Florence Hartmann, 'Croatian President on Internal Conflict', *Le Monde*, 11/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-093, 14/5/1991. 'Croatian President Tuđman's Statement', *Zagreb Domestic Service*, 3/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-086, 3/5/1991.

⁹⁷ ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.3a (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 8/1/1992), p.15. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Smilja Avramov, T32435.

⁹⁸ Hudelist, *Tuđman*, p.700-3. Konrad Kolšek, 1991. *Prvi pucnji u SFRJ* (Belgrade: Dah Graf Danas, 2005), pp.122-3. Bilandžić, pp.378-9. ICTY-Milošević: E-P397.1 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #1, 11/10/1991-18/10/1991), pp.58-60. Ivica Dinkić, *Domovinski obrat - politička biografija Stipe Mesića* (Zagreb: V.B.Z., 2004), pp.68, 134.

⁹⁹ Compare, for example: ICTY-Milošević: E-P397.1 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #1, 11/10/1991-18/10/1991), pp.58-60. Bulatović, *Pravila ćutanja*, p.68.

¹⁰⁰ For example: Lučić & Lovrenović, pp.10-12, 27-30, 86-7. Nenad Ivanković, *Bonn: Druga hrvatska fronta* (Zagreb: Mladost, 1993), p.70. Erceg, p.184. Croatian Presidential Transcript, 4/3/1992, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.slobodanpraljak.com/MATERIJALI/SVJEDOCI/MiomirZuzul/42.pdf>. ICTY-Milošević: E-P397.6 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #6, 22/1/1992-9/3/1992), p.47. Zimmerman, pp.181-4.

Substantial evidence stands against such a conclusion, however. The Karađorđevo meeting did not happen in isolation, and was not the first contact between the two presidents. Tuđman and Milošević had already met at expanded meetings of the SFRJ Presidency in mid-1990,¹⁰¹ and throughout 1991 such meetings, including the summits of presidents and, later, international negotiations, were common. In the month that Karađorđevo and Tikveš took place alone, Tuđman and Milošević met a further six times at multilateral meetings, lasting more than fifty hours. Partial or complete minutes are available for many of these meetings, in addition to reports on joint press conferences afterwards.¹⁰² They make absolutely clear that Milošević was maintaining his support for Croatian Serb self-determination and was in major disagreement with Tuđman on this and many other issues. As Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov has recalled, Milošević and Tuđman always had 'the most polarised stands'.¹⁰³ The members of Serbia's expert team also took the same stances in their meetings with their Croatian counterparts in April, such that the Croatian experts asked Tuđman what the point of the meetings were, as the Serbs refused to recognise Croatian borders.¹⁰⁴ This is all completely inconsistent with the idea that Milošević was trying to trick Tuđman with promises of recognising Croatian authority over the Krajina.

It seems clear that at Karađorđevo Milošević and Tuđman discussed the idea of dividing Bosnia.¹⁰⁵ In Tikveš Milošević also gave Tuđman a paper from his security services

¹⁰¹ Their first multilateral meeting was reportedly on 12 June 1990, and already on 20 July Croatian presidency representative Stipe Šušar brokered a private chat between them. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.137-8. Misha Glenny, *The Balkans, 1904-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 1999), p.630. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p.139.

¹⁰² For minutes of republican summits and presidency sessions see: Bulatović, *Neizgovorena odbrana*, pp.64-108. Kosta Nikolić & Vladimir Petrović, *Od mira do rata: dokumenta Predsedništva SFRJ, I: januar - mart 1991* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, Fond za humanitarno pravo, 2011). Kosta Nikolić & Vladimir Petrović, *Rat u Sloveniji: dokumenta Predsedništva SFRJ, II: jun - jul 1991* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, Fond za humanitarno pravo, 2012). Public comments can be found in FBIS, and details on other meetings in: Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.231-5. ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić); E-P397.1 (Diary of the Vance Mission to Yugoslavia, #1, 11/10/1991-18/10/1991), pp.58-60. Domljan. Nobilo. Drnovšek, pp.206-7.

¹⁰³ RFE, Svjedoci Raspada: Kiro Gligorov.

¹⁰⁴ Bilandžić, pp.372-7. Avramov, pp.140-1.

¹⁰⁵ Confirmed by: BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman. ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Hrvoje Šarinić; Milan Babić; Ante Marković. ICTY-Prlić(et al): Witness Josip Manolić. Ante Marković, 'Moja istina...'. Zvonimir Trajković, 'Bošnjaci su nam nudili Tuzlu', *Slobodna Bosna*, 5/6/2002. Kolšek, pp.122-3. Alija Izetbegović, *Inescapable Questions: Autobiographical Notes* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation,

warning about the alleged ill-intentions of the Bosnian Muslim leadership towards both Serbs and Croats.¹⁰⁶ Šarinić regards this as an attempt to 'hook' Tuđman onto the division of Bosnia.¹⁰⁷ It is, however, well documented that Tuđman had, for years, argued that Bosnia should either be annexed to Croatia or divided in agreement with the Serbs, and he had continued to speak about this, both publicly and privately, throughout the year preceding Karadžić.¹⁰⁸ This was, clearly, far more Tuđman's project than Milošević's, and Milošević advisor Zvonimir Trajković explicitly recalls this as 'Tuđman's offer' and proposal, not Milošević's – which, although considered, was soon rejected.¹⁰⁹ Instead, throughout 1991 the dominant option for Milošević was to retain the whole of Bosnia within Yugoslavia. As Milošević told Karadžić in May 1991: 'Your position should be that you are against secession and that you want Bosnia to stay in Yugoslavia', a position 'a great number of Muslims' would support.¹¹⁰

In July 1991 Tuđman's open support for the partition of Bosnia actually almost helped scare the Bosnian Muslims into making a deal with the Serbs.¹¹¹ Milošević and Karadžić were certainly aware of this dynamic and exploited it – '[the Muslims] need to know that in fifteen minutes we could also make a deal with Franjo' (Karadžić).¹¹² But their ambition to retain Bosnia as a whole in Yugoslavia was very public, and Milošević even

2002), p.93.

¹⁰⁶ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Hrvoje Šarinić. Also: Kolšek, pp.122-3.

¹⁰⁷ ICTY-Milošević: P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić).

¹⁰⁸ See: Franjo Tuđman, *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe* (New York: East European Monographs, 1981), pp.112-5. Marinko Čulić, *Tuđman i poslije Tuđmana* (Zagreb: Novi Live, 2014), pp.70-7. Hudelist, *Tuđman*, pp.693-9. Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2003). Izetbegović, pp.83-4. Zimmerman, pp.74, 181-4. ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Stjepan Mesić, T10657; Petar Kriste, T14843, 4966. Andjelic, pp.137-8, 164. Nobile, p.50. Tomac, pp.39-40. Domljan, p.21. Josip Šentija, *Ako Hrvatske bude* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2005), p.159. Interviews: Slaven Letica, Ivo Banac (Zagreb: 2009). Ian Traynor, 'Croatian militia ready to resist Yugoslavian army', *The Guardian (London)*, 21/1/1991. Samo Kobenter, 'Open Border Question on the Balkans', *Der Standard (Vienna)*, 26/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-039, 26/2/1991. Zoran Odić, 'Kucan Ready Even To Resign', *Oslobodjenje*, 19/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-245, 20/12/1990.

¹⁰⁹ Zvonimir Trajković, 'Bošnjaci su nam nudili Tuzlu', *Slobodna Bosna*, 5/6/2002.

¹¹⁰ Domovina Intercept: B6518/B6520 (Karadžić-Milošević, 29/5/1991). Also: B6588 (Karadžić-Milošević, 26/7/1991). B6628 (Karadžić-Milošević, 31/7/1991). B6672/B6959 (Karadžić-Milošević, 6/9/1991). B6712 (Karadžić-Milošević, 13/9/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 124/1991). Donia, *Karadžić*, pp.85-9. Judah, p.197.

¹¹¹ Duško Doder, 'Muslims, in shift of allegiance, seek pact with Serbs', *Baltimore Sun*, 26/7/1991.

¹¹² Domovina Intercept: B6619 (Karadžić-Brdanin, 28/7/1991). Also see: B6588 (Karadžić-Milošević, 26/7/1991).

expressed it to Tuđman directly (at, for example, a trilateral meeting with Izetbegović on 12 June 1991), belying the notion that Milošević was simultaneously making secret promises to Tuđman on Bosnia, or that Tuđman could have believed he had an agreement with Milošević on this.¹¹³ Throughout 1991 Milošević and Karadžić in fact repeatedly expressed their suspicion that it was Izetbegović who had an agreement with Tuđman, further confirming that, as Karadžić said in July, 'we [have] made no agreement with the Croats', either genuine or fraudulent.¹¹⁴

Concerning the Croatian Serbs, Tuđman told the BBC that at the time Milošević accepted 'the idea of the necessity of normalisation of Croatian-Serbian relations, how it is necessary to resolve the Knin rebellion and the Serbian question in Croatia gradually, with the creation of trust, opening of traffic, and then also some political solution, which would be acceptable for Serbs in Croatia. He repeated that.'¹¹⁵ According to Viro, Milošević promised that as a show of goodwill, he would pressure Knin to free the communication path Zagreb-Knin-Split.¹¹⁶ Milošević also indicated a willingness to make some concessions on Krajina. At their 12 June 1991 meeting, for example, Milošević spoke about the Croatian Serbs' right to self-determination, but Tuđman insisted with the aid of a map that for geographic and strategic reasons Croatia could never accept the separation of Knin, as it would divide Croatia in two. Milošević conceded that 'Objectively it is so.'¹¹⁷ At Karadorđevo and subsequently, Milošević also reportedly accepted the idea of humane resettlement of the population, of those individuals who did not want to end up in the 'wrong' state.¹¹⁸ Several sources also indicate that Milošević agreed that, in a prospective division of Bosnia, Tuđman could have the Muslim-inhabited Cazin Krajina region in western Bosnia.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.302. Domovina Intercept: B6553 (Karadžić-Milošević, 12/6/1991). ICTY-Milošević: P503.2a (Chart of intercepts reviewed by Stjepan Kljuić), p.1.

¹¹⁴ Domovina Intercept: B6588 (Karadžić-Milošević, 26/7/1991). See: B6725 (Karadžić-Milošević, 19/9/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-P613.5a (Intercept Karadžić-Koljević-Milošević, 4/6/1991).

¹¹⁵ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, pp.9, 11-14.

¹¹⁶ Viro, p.151.

¹¹⁷ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, p.9. Nobile, p.142.

¹¹⁸ Nobile, p.66. BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, p.13. ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.3a (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 8/1/1992), p.49.

¹¹⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Milan Babić, T13111-2; Stjepan Kljuić, T24393-5; Stjepan Mesić, T10657; E-P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić), p.3. Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who

Tuđman would tell the BBC in 1994 that Milošević conducted 'Byzantine' politics - 'agreeing in principle, but in practice wanting to create a Greater Serbia'.¹²⁰ However, it is significant that Tuđman never actually claimed, to the BBC or his colleagues, that Milošević had conceded Croatian authority over the Krajina, and, in fact, all Milošević's concessions were still consistent with his support for Croatian Serb self-determination – something which, as noted, Milošević was consistently advocating. Milošević always emphasised Serbia's lack of territorial pretensions, and particularly with the promotion of the idea of 'special status' in autumn 1991, the focus of his rhetoric shifted away from 'all Serbs in one state', non-recognition of 'administrative' republican borders and 'remaining in Yugoslavia' towards the rights of the Serbian people of Croatia. As Milošević said on 25 October 1991, for example, 'the key question is... how to resolve the position of the Serbian people in Croatia... we are not talking about any territorial pretensions, but about the freedom and rights of these people. This is all.'¹²¹ Milošević and Jović also emphasised that they had no intention of forcing the Croatian Serbs to reject Croatia – 'We are ready to agree to anything the Serbs in Croatia opt for', as Serbia's Foreign Minister said.¹²² The key phrase in Tuđman's recollection of Milošević's stance is, however, without doubt, finding a solution 'which would be acceptable for Serbs in Croatia' – as the Krajina Serbs would never accept a solution within Croatia, while the 'rights' that Milošević spoke of included the right to be de facto independent from Croatia.

Milošević always emphasised his support for a peaceful solution – the problem was that his and Tuđman's ideas of a peaceful solution were very different.¹²³ As already discussed, Milošević did not generally share Tuđman's optimism that a peaceful solution

Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993. He may even have said Tuđman could take all the Muslims if he wanted: Hudelist, *Tuđman*, p.696. ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1421.E (Mladić Diary, 2/4/1993-24/10/1993), p.241.

¹²⁰ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman.

¹²¹ 'Milošević Rejects Territorial Pretensions', *Sarajevo Radio*, 25/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-208, 28/10/1991

¹²² 'The Army Has Made Many Mistakes', *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 7/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-195, 8/10/1991. ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 12/4/1991). ICTY-Prlić(et al): E-P80.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 18/11/1991), pp.56-7.

¹²³ See, for example: 'Milošević Comments on Federal Presidency Decisions', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 9/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-091, 10/5/1991.

would be found. But there is, in fact, some evidence that Milošević was trying to get the Croatian Serbs to take a more moderate approach at this time (detailed later), while the development of the idea of 'special status' showed some willingness to find a solution, consistent with Croatian Serb self-determination, that Zagreb might be able to accept. And indeed, there were apparently some renewed Croat-Serb 'expert' discussions around June 1991, probably involving Avramov and Tuđman advisor Zvonko Lerotić.¹²⁴ Avramov testified that Croatian representatives were involved in the discussions that led to her condominium proposal, and it is notable that it was Lerotić who developed a July 1991 proposal from Zagreb for Serbian territorial autonomies within Croatia.¹²⁵ There was a significant gap between these two ideas, however, and this was undoubtedly why no agreement was reached.¹²⁶

Milošević's concession over Knin, meanwhile, probably only actually pertained to those territories near Knin whose inclusion in Krajina would have cut Croatia in two. Already in February 1991 Milošević told the Bosnian Serbs that the dividing line between Serbs and Croats would not be Knin railway, as Croatia could never accept losing control of the coast, though the Serbs there would find this very hard to accept.¹²⁷ The recollections of Milan Babić support this conclusion: shortly after Karađorđevo, Babić has asserted, he saw Milošević examining a map of Yugoslavia and discussing how 'Tuđman needs Bihać [i.e. the Cazin Krajina]' and also a road from Benkovac to Drniš, cutting off the territories Krajina claimed nearest the Croatian coast.¹²⁸ The concession of minor territories near the coast clearly implied that the larger part of Krajina would indeed be separate from Croatia, or such concessions would have no meaning. And as Tuđman advisor Mario Nobile recalls, Milošević's concession was 'implicitly seeking territorial deals elsewhere'.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.3a (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 8/1/1992), p.14. Domovina Intercept: B6518/B6520 (Karadžić-Milošević, 29/5/1991).

¹²⁵ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Smilja Avramov, T32435. 'Tuđman Adviser Advocates Serb Autonomy', *Tanjug*, 31/7/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-148, 1/8/1991.

¹²⁶ ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.3a (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 8/1/1992), p.15.

¹²⁷ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-D38 (Statement of Dragan Đokanović), p.5; Witness Dragan Đokanović, T10454.

¹²⁸ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13111-2. Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993.

¹²⁹ Nobile, p.142. Members of the Serbian expert commission also reportedly proposed, as an example of

Agreement in principle on population resettlement, meanwhile, did not resolve the question of the assignment of territories, and it seems that Milošević's thinking on territories was like Tuđman's but in reverse: Croatian appetites could be satisfied in Bosnia, as a pay-off for losing, with some territorial concessions or exchanges, Serb territories in Croatia. In March 1994, for example, he told the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs that Tuđman would eventually be forced to at least accept negotiations on Croatia's territory and to give up Krajina - with all encompassing Serb-Croat negotiations, 'Tuđman would have the possibility to defend concessions before his public as an historic Serbian-Croatian compromise'.¹³⁰ Although it was considered, and remained an option, however, this idea was clearly not dominant for Milošević in 1991, as his policy towards Bosnia indicates.

Rather than Milošević attempting to deceive Tuđman with false promises, Tuđman may, at times, have misread parts of Milošević's approach – which was, after all, significantly different from the Croatian allegation that he was trying to build a Greater Serbia - as revealing an openness to even more significant concessions. After meetings in October 1991 and January 1992, for example, Tuđman publicly expressed his satisfaction that Milošević had acknowledged that the issue was one of 'rights of minority nations', not territory, and Serbia had no territorial pretensions, as if this meant a solution within Croatia. Milošević meant by this the right to independent autonomies and self-determination, however.¹³¹

Tuđman commented in July 1991 that 'Milošević is crazy, but he is still not so crazy that it would not be possible to agree with him',¹³² and he would later tell the BBC that, in spite of Milošević's 'Byzantine' politics, 'I still think that from the very beginning in Milošević's approach there was to a certain extent also present a realisation about the

a possible exchange of populations, that the Muslims in Cazin could be exchanged for the Serbs in Knin, though at the same time they sought for Krajina to have access to the sea in Dalmatia, by Obrovac. Bilandžić, pp.372-7.

¹³⁰ Nikola Koljević, *Stvaranje Republike Srpske, Dnevnik 1993-1995: Knjiga 1* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2008), pp.459-60. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2540 (Mladić Diary, 15/3/1994).

¹³¹ Avramov, pp.164, 279, 284.

¹³² Ivanković, p.70.

necessity of a Croatian-Serbian agreement because of the future international order in this part of the world.¹³³ It could be argued that Tuđman was right in this assessment, given that Milošević does, later, seem to have renounced the RSK, was more moderate than many of the people around him, and was even at this stage giving some thought to finding a compromise.¹³⁴ It cannot be completely ruled out that Milošević, like Rašković, had moments of doubt about the Serbian project in 1991, as both Babić and Tuđman apparently suspected.¹³⁵ Exploring a solution within Croatia would have opened up a whole new set of challenges, however, and cost Milošević a great deal politically, and thus, with the JNA increasingly on side, the already set course could have seemed a wiser, and less politically risky, choice. Perhaps Tuđman was right when he assessed, in late 1992, that 'Milošević understands our argument' but 'does not give up Greater Serbia because he feels he cannot be hurt'.¹³⁶

Most evidence, however, points to Milošević's commitment to Serb secession in this time period, and Tuđman's misplaced optimism and misreadings of Milošević are undeniable. Rather than secret promises from Milošević, however, their fundamental source lies, I think, in Tuđman's fixation on a Croatian-Serbian agreement as the solution to problems in the Balkans, as well as his policy of negotiating and avoiding war. Tuđman had a long-standing interest in the Croatian-Serbian Sporazum (Agreement) of 1939, which partitioned Bosnia, and was absolutely convinced of the necessity of a new Croatian-Serbian agreement, satisfying Serb expansionism with an agreed division of Bosnia – a 'smaller Greater Serbia', as Šarinić put it.¹³⁷ He did not

¹³³ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman.

¹³⁴ It is likely that in 1993-95 Milošević was genuinely prepared to accept a solution within Croatian borders, as he was then telling both Zagreb and international negotiators. See, for example: Šarinić. Vladislav Jovanović. ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Charles Kirduja; David Owen. Various documents from David Owen's 'Balkan Odyssey' Digital Archive, available online at: <http://sca-arch.liv.ac.uk/ead/html/gb141boda-p1.shtml#boda>. Interview Borislav Mikelić (Belgrade: 2007). Bilandžić, pp.437, 444, 452. ICTY-Gotovina(et al): E-P499.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 18/8/1995), pp.10, 18-19.

¹³⁵ Suggested by: Vladislav Jovanović. pp.58-60.

¹³⁶ ICTY-Milošević: E-P398.5 (Diary of the ICFY, #5, 28/11/1992-31/12/1992), pp.4-5.

¹³⁷ Branko Tudjen, 'The Superpowers Will Force A Compromise', *Vecernji List*, 27/8/1994, pp.10-11, in FBIS-EEU-94-172, 6/9/1994. Also: ICTY-Prlić(et al): P-5090 (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 15/9/1993), pp.18-19. Nobilo, p.50. ICTY-Gotovina(et al): E-P499.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 18/8/1995). Seada Vranić, 'The Pretzel Given a Natural Shape', *Borba*, 25-26/1/1992, p.3, in FBIS-

advocate the total defeat of Serbia, but instead a negotiated compromise, as, 'as a historian, I know that before we normalise relations with our chief opponent, Serbia, we will have no peace', a thesis he 'constantly repeated'.¹³⁸ After the division of Bosnia, however, 'relations between Serbia and Croatia would be like those between France and Germany [today]'.¹³⁹ An agreement with Belgrade also implied a peaceful resolution of the status of Serbs in Croatia – and tantalisingly, carried the possibility of an agreed exchange of populations, with all or some of Croatia's Serbs leaving for Serbia (instead of, or in conjunction with, minority rights for those remaining), which was for Tuđman a logical and ideal solution.¹⁴⁰ Tuđman regarded much of this as an historical necessity and inevitability, and was never interested in explaining or discussing it with colleagues.¹⁴¹ In addition, Tuđman had numerous other reasons to continue his policy of negotiations, however meagre the results – to buy time, win international support and avoid a full war with the JNA/Serbia – and optimism could justify the continuation of this peaceful strategy, when many of his colleagues sought all-out war.¹⁴²

Karadorđevo and the contacts connected with it can reveal much about the thinking in Zagreb and Belgrade with regard to both Bosnia and Croatia. However, this episode represents just one failed attempt to explore possible compromise solutions which would avoid war. Given how far apart the thinking of Tuđman and Milošević was, there

EEU-92-031, 14/2/1992.

¹³⁸ ICTY-Prlić(et al): E-P7856.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 13/2/1994), p.6. Dinkić, p.134. Similarly: ICTY-Prlić(et al): E-P3195.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 5/7/1993), pp.36, 54; E-P5080.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 15/9/1993), p.22.

¹³⁹ 'Dušan Bilandžić: Tuđman mi je rekao - 'Kad podijelimo Bosnu, ja i Sloba bit ćemo saveznici'', *Nacional*, 5/6/2012. Also: Nobile, p.50, 55, 67, 178, 188.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example: Mirić. Hudelist, *Tuđman*, pp.709-17. Milan Đukić. Juzbašić. Zoran Odic, 'Kucan Ready Even To Resign', *Oslobodjenje*, 19/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-245, 20/12/1990. Franjo Tuđman, 'Why we will never give in to the Serbs', *The European* (London), 16-18/8/1991, p.8. Boris Pavelić, 'Slavko Goldstein: Franjo Tuđman je strastveno želio da u Hrvatskoj bude što manje Srba', *Novi List*, 30/4/2011. ICTY-Milošević: P596.7a (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 2/3/1992); Witness Stjepan Mesić, T10656. ICTY-Kordić(et al): E-P1 (Statement of Stjepan Mesić), p.2. ICTY-Brđanin: E-P34 (SDS BH Deputies Club meeting, 28/2/1992). Croatian Presidential Transcript, 4/3/1992, accessed 1/8/2014 from:

<http://www.slobodanpraljck.com/MATERIJALI/SVJEDOCI/MiomirZuzul/42.pdf>. ICTY-Gotovina: E-P457.E (Croatian Presidential Transcript, 17/1/1995) p.18.

¹⁴¹ 'Dušan Bilandžić: Tuđman mi je rekao - 'Kad podijelimo Bosnu, ja i Sloba bit ćemo saveznici'', *Nacional*, 5/6/2012. Domljan, p.301.

¹⁴² See Chapter 3, footnote 78.

was little prospect for such talks to succeed. They were, moreover, quickly overtaken by events.

4.3. The Role of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA)

The JNA and 'Reducing' Yugoslavia

Serbia's proposals for imposing Serb secession on Croatia were premised on the JNA agreeing to implement this, withdrawing from rump Croatia (and Slovenia) and deploying to defend 'Serb borders' in Croatia. But what was the JNA's attitude to these proposals, to the idea of creating a 'reduced' Yugoslavia, and to the Serbian rebellion in Croatia?

Yugoslav Defence Secretary Veljko Kadijević was the man ultimately in charge of the JNA in 1990-91, along with chief of staff Blagoje Adžić and deputy defence secretary Stane Brovet. Kadijević considered himself a Yugoslav at the time, and came from a mixed Serb-Croat background in Croatia. Adžić was a Bosnian Serb, and Brovet a Slovenian. This triumvirate would rule the JNA until Kadijević's resignation in January 1992.

In his account of the break-up, published in 1993, Kadijević presented the army as having decisively and consistently conducted the pro-Serb line he eventually took. He claimed that in April 1990 the JNA leadership decided not to oppose separatism, and the only question from then on was forming a new, reduced Yugoslavia of those nations who wanted it – Serbia's stance. Moreover, the JNA never advocated a coup to 'save' Yugoslavia and opposed such adventurist ideas.¹⁴³ Many other sources, such as Jović's diary and the memoirs of Kadijević's predecessor Branko Mamula, however, starkly contradict Kadijević's account.¹⁴⁴ Kadijević's book seems, essentially, to be an attempt to justify the course the army eventually took by claiming it was planned all along; and that the army had not made any mistakes in 'losing' large parts of Yugoslavia, because it

¹⁴³ Veljko Kadijević, *Moje Viđenje Raspada* (Belgrade: Politika, 1993), p.110.

¹⁴⁴ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.* Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija* (Podgorica: CID, 2000). And: Dragan Vukšić, *JNA i raspad SFR Jugoslavije: od čuvara do grobara svoje države* (Stara Pazova: Tekomgraf, 2006).

had always favoured that solution. In fact, the army, particularly Kadijević, was extremely indecisive, constantly vacillating between the different options it advocated.

It is true that the JNA leadership agreed with Serbia that the Serbs in Croatia had the right to self-determination. In June 1990, and on several occasions thereafter, Kadijević even agreed in principle with the idea of withdrawing to Serb borders in Croatia. But it was not carried out, and, on the contrary, even in spring 1991 the army was moving more forces into Croat and Slovene areas.¹⁴⁵

As Jović observed at the time, the evidence suggests that the JNA leadership still hoped to maintain a united Yugoslavia. By autumn 1990 Kadijević may have been willing to allow Slovenia to secede, but, as he told both Slovene representative Janez Drnovšek and Tuđman in January 1991, Croatia needed to remain within a Yugoslav federation, as its exit would lead to civil war in Croatia and Bosnia.¹⁴⁶ He and others in the army would ideally have liked to retain Slovenia, also, and this seems to have been the goal of the JNA's operations there in June-July 1991, telling the Serbs at the time that Yugoslavia could be saved with the support of the international community.¹⁴⁷ Adžić even told the Serbian leadership openly – and JNA officers publicly – as late as June/July 1991 that the idea of 'all Serbs in one state' was unrealisable and would mean a 'civil war of extermination', while 'protecting' the Serbs in Croatia was unreasonable, as the JNA had to protect all Yugoslav nations.¹⁴⁸ Branko Mamula was also in contact with Kadijević, Adžić and Aleksandar Vasiljević, the chief of JNA security (*Organi bezbednosti*, OB), at that time, and recalls their unanimity on the goal of preserving Yugoslavia as a whole, with various plans being formulated to that end.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.236.

¹⁴⁶ Drnovšek, p.214. BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman, p.10. Šarinić, p.24.

¹⁴⁷ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.303. Kolšek, p.261. 'Interview: General Aleksandar Vasiljević: Rumors of An All Powerful Service', *Transitions Online*, 10/1/1998, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.tol.org/client/article/18035-interview-general-aleksandar-Vasiljević-rumors-of-an-all-powerful-service.html>.

¹⁴⁸ ICTY-Milošević: E-P405Aa (Statement of Milosav Đorđević), p.8. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.303-4. Also: Mamula, pp.210-23, 236-7.

¹⁴⁹ Mamula, pp.177-8, 210-23.

Kadijević often advocated a coup or state of emergency to impose a solution to the Yugoslav crisis, and told the Serbs that this would include referendums and the right to self-determination for those who wanted it, and then the formation of a Yugoslavia of those remaining. The Serbs, however, doubted - probably rightly - whether Kadijević and others in the army leadership would really fight to overthrow the Croatian and Slovenian governments, and then after a brief period simply let those republics secede. As Jović noted in early 1991, the military had still not 'swallowed' the idea of withdrawing to new borders or allowing the Croats and Slovenes to secede, a prospect it viewed with inherent displeasure.¹⁵⁰ Kadijević does appear to have been reluctant to force nations to remain in Yugoslavia against their will,¹⁵¹ but the JNA leadership seems, at least to some extent, to have deluded itself into thinking that once the nationalist leaderships were removed, the peoples would return to the Yugoslav (and socialist) fold.¹⁵²

The JNA leadership, though often critical of the Serbs, viewed the governments of Serbia and Montenegro as the only fundamentally pro-Yugoslav (and socialist) governments remaining, and in a potential coup does not seem to have envisaged toppling Milošević – as Kadijević said at the time, 'He is the only one who is fighting for Yugoslavia'.¹⁵³ They shared support for a somewhat more centralised federal Yugoslavia, and hostility to the 'separatists' in Slovenia and Croatia, particularly the Croatian leadership, whom they saw as pro-Ustaša.¹⁵⁴ Kadijević also often shared Serbia's criticisms of federal Prime Minister Ante Marković.

However, the alliance between the JNA and Serbia was not at all complete in 1990-91. Serbia did not control the JNA, and Kadijević did not really agree with Serbia's ideas on establishing Serb borders in Croatia, but rather, for a long time, strove to preserve

¹⁵⁰ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.236. And: pp.290, 307.

¹⁵¹ Mamula, p.159.

¹⁵² See, for example: Nobilo & Letica, pp.10-1. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.228, 247, 290. Dinkić, p.133. 'Kadrovska baza [Interview with Zoran Čičak]', *Vreme*, 11/10/2001.

¹⁵³ Ante Marković, 'Moja istina...'. Similarly: Dinkić, p.133. On the other hand: 'Kadrovska baza [Interview with Zoran Čičak]', *Vreme*, 11/10/2001.

¹⁵⁴ BBC-DOY: Franjo Tuđman. Kadijević, pp.92, 112, 125. Dinkić, p.133

Yugoslavia and avoid civil war. He was also very indecisive and unsure about which course of action to take, perhaps as a consequence of different interests in the JNA and Kadijević's over-riding desire to maintain unity in the army. In July 1991, after the failed operation in Slovenia, the JNA accepted its withdrawal from that republic, and thereafter Kadijević moved closer to Serbia's stance, on 30 July telling Milošević and Jović that he 'no longer believes in any variant for the survival of an integral Yugoslavia'.¹⁵⁵ Even then, though, there were continual disagreements between Serbia and the JNA leadership, which continued to operate fairly independently of Serbia, and as late as September 1991 Jović still felt that the military was 'intoxicated with Yugoslavia, even though we have discussed the fact that that is no longer realistic a hundred times'.¹⁵⁶

There was a fairly widespread perception at the time that although Kadijević was pro-Yugoslav, JNA chief of staff Adžić was a hardline Serb nationalist.¹⁵⁷ Adžić does seem to have been more decisive, conservative and hardline than Kadijević, but no more 'pro-Serb'. In fact, Jović's diary shows Adžić was more explicitly pro-Yugoslav and confrontational with the Serbian leadership than Kadijević, openly criticising them for their nationalism.¹⁵⁸ When the Serbs refused to elect Mesić as Yugoslav President in a regular rotation in May 1991 Adžić even threatened Jović and Milošević with arrest.¹⁵⁹

There were, certainly, conflicting agendas in the JNA. Although the officer corps was disproportionately Serbian, this was not true of the high ranks, and there were many Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and others in leading positions.¹⁶⁰ Some were hardline pro-Yugoslav conservatives who supported a coup to save Yugoslavia, or even endorsed

¹⁵⁵ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.326, 342-6. And: Kadijević, p.93. Vukšić, pp.226-32.

¹⁵⁶ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.343. See also: Wijnaendts, pp.102-3.

¹⁵⁷ Mesić, p.117. Izetbegović, p.87. Vukšić, p.236. Vladan Marjanovic, 'The Variation of Military Rhetoric', *Borba*, 11/7/1991, p.9, in FBIS-EER-91-111, 30/7/1991. Carol J. Williams, 'Profile: On Carrying a Fierce Grudge for Half a Century', *LA Times*, 16/7/1991.

¹⁵⁸ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.106-7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.291.

¹⁶⁰ For the national composition of the JNA see: James Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military: The Yugoslav Crisis* (London: Pinter Publisher, 1992). Mile Bjelajac, *Die jugoslawische Erfahrung mit der multiethnischen Armee 1918-1991* (Institutes für neuere Geschichte Serbiens, 2002), accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.udi.rs/articles/MBJ_jug_erfahrung_mit_multiethnischen_armee.pdf.

the later war to defend Serbs from Croatian 'fascists'; others were sympathetic to their national leaderships. For example, the Croat Anton Tus, head of the air force until May 1991, was connecting with the Croatian government, and later in 1991 served as chief of staff of Croatia's armed forces, while his successor, Zvonko Jurjević, in office until January 1992 and active during the war, was also Croatian.

JNA Intervention in Croatia

The JNA leadership was hostile to Tuđman's Croatian authorities and the actions of their new police units, which were perceived as provoking civil war and bloodshed. Such actions could also serve as justification for the JNA's intervention in Yugoslavia, to save it from inter-national conflict and civil war. At the same time, however, the JNA leadership also attempted to be neutral and to avoid siding with the Serbs.

On 17 August 1990, for example, JNA jets had prevented the sending of three helicopters of Croatian special forces to Knin, citing incorrect flight co-ordinates, while Adžić warned Mesić over the phone that if any blood was shed, the JNA would intervene.¹⁶¹ There is also some information that JNA units in Knin went out of their barracks, unarmed, into the town centre, as a possible sign of intervention, which in the end did not materialise.¹⁶² Kadijević was on holiday in Croatia at the time, and told Jović he was 'upset' by these developments, noting that 'We are in a difficult position if they call on the military to defend the people.'¹⁶³ He subsequently rejected a proposal from Anton Tus for action against the Serb guards in Knin – 'do you want the Serbs to say that the JNA is against it?'¹⁶⁴ - but he also insisted on investigating and disarming Krajina Serb as well as Croat formations, and in January 1991 still rejected Serbian

¹⁶¹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.160. BBC-DOY: Josip Boljkovac, p.8.

¹⁶² BBC-DOY: Babić, p.15. Interviews: Lazar Macura, Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 11/2007, 7/2009). Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.160.

¹⁶³ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.161.

¹⁶⁴ Vlado Vurusic, 'General Kadijević je s maršalom Jazovim dogovarao puč u SSSR-u i Jugoslaviji [Interview with Anton Tus]', *Jutarnji List*, 4/11/2007, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/general-Kadijević-je-s-marsalom-jazovim-dogovarao-puc-u-sssr-u-i-jugoslaviji/274885/>.

requests to protect Serbs in Croatia, not wanting the army to be seen as 'Serb'.¹⁶⁵ In March 1991, however, he himself proposed the JNA's first unilateral intervention, over clashes in Pakrac, authorised by Jović without a vote by the Presidency.¹⁶⁶

The JNA thereafter got involved in several other incidents, usually with Presidency authorisation, acting, it claimed, to prevent conflict by positioning itself as a 'buffer' between the two sides. This is often seen as part of a pro-Serb plan to cover 'Serbian' territory in Croatia.¹⁶⁷ Certainly, by the summer or autumn the JNA's thinking had shifted more towards Serbia's, and its role as a 'buffer' did have the effect, by then, of being deployed to secure/defend Serbian self-determination. It was principally for this reason that Serbia supported JNA deployment in Croatia.

However, the initial motivation for the JNA does indeed seem to have been to prevent clashes and civil war, and in May 1991 the SFRJ Presidency, including Croatia's representative, unanimously authorised the JNA to perform this role.¹⁶⁸ In the most famous early incidents – Pakrac, Plitvice and Borovo Selo – JNA deployment did not affect which side controlled the area in question, which in the cases of Pakrac and Plitvice was the Croatian MUP. In key Serb campaigns, such as the conquest of Banija in late July 1991, the JNA declined to get involved (the local JNA commander, in that case, saying that this was a battle between Chetniks and Ustaše, and not for them).¹⁶⁹ And even as JNA thinking shifted, as the authors of *Balkan Battlegrounds* note, until the start of the war proper in Croatia in mid-September 1991 the JNA does indeed still appear to have been trying to act neutrally and prevent conflicts.¹⁷⁰ A recorded telephone conversation on 13 September between Adžić and Ratko Mladić, then chief of staff of

¹⁶⁵ Vasiljević, pp.89-90, 92-7. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.231.

¹⁶⁶ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.* Nikolic & Petrović, *Od mira do rata*, pp.325-7.

¹⁶⁷ For example: Silber and Little, pp.135, 170. Judah, pp.174.-7. Tanner, pp.241-7, 253-5. LeBor, p.150. Meier, p.175. Cviic, p.208.

¹⁶⁸ 'Presidency Statement on Ending Conflict', *Tanjug*, 9/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-090, 9/5/1991.

¹⁶⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković. Marina Pjevalica, 'I Will Gladly Return to Krajina', *Srpski Glas*, 23/3/1992, p.6, in FBIS-EER-92-055, 4/5/1992.

¹⁷⁰ CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.1*, p.92. See, for example: ICTY-Milošević: Witness B-050, T19186. 'Knin Corps Commander Launches Peace Initiative', *Tanjug*, 15/8/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-159, 16/8/1991.

the Knin corps, clearly shows this, with Adžić angrily remonstrating with Mladić for a pro-Serbian action he had ordered and emphasising that the JNA's mission was not to support Krajina or expand the territory under its control – which was 'expressly forbidden' - but to prevent 'mutual extinction' and 'reach an agreement [to] not spill any blood'.¹⁷¹ Similarly, Adžić told Karadžić at the time that the army's operations were 'strictly prescribed': it only fought back when directly attacked, and when there were Croat-Serb clashes, the army 'separates those forces' and 'acting together, restore[s] peace'.¹⁷²

This is not to say that the JNA was fully neutral and never biased - unsurprising given that Croat forces saw them as their enemy and Serbs their ally – and elements in the JNA were more actively pro-Serb, something with which the leadership was to some degree complicit.¹⁷³ The JNA leadership does seem to have seen its mission in Croatia in these terms, however.

As detailed in the following chapter, by summer 1991 the JNA had begun arming Serbian units within Croatia, though often secretly and without the knowledge of regular command structures. This was certainly one sign of the JNA's shift to a pro-Serbian orientation. However, Croatian arming in autumn and winter 1990 seems to have had primarily defensive motivations, with Tuđman even apparently convinced that war would not occur, and the same could apply to the arming of the Serbs - one source, indeed, suggests that Mamula had persuaded Kadijević to arm the Serbs 'to avoid a genocide'.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, regardless of what type of war occurred – including, for example, a war to defeat separatists and preserve Yugoslavia – Serbian forces in Croatia would definitely be the JNA's allies, and Mamula himself describes the goal of arming

¹⁷¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1513 (Recorded conversation, Mladić-Adžić, 13/9/1991), pp.3-4.

¹⁷² Domovina Intercept: B6690 (Karadžić-Adžić, 7/9/1991).

¹⁷³ See, for example: ICTY-Milošević: E-P350.3a (Letter from Col. Dušan Smiljanic, 16/10/1994). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 79 (Krajina DB report, Korenica, 19/7/1991), pp.180-1.

¹⁷⁴ ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 146D ('What to do with the Serbs of Gorski Kotar', 17/4/1994), pp.293-4. Also: Kadijević, pp.125, 127-8.

as the creation of a united Serb-Croat front for Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁵ (In summer and autumn 1991 the JNA also began forming and arming Bosnian Serb units, although the Serbian leadership and the JNA was, at that time, still hoping to retain the whole of Bosnia within Yugoslavia, rather than to fight the Muslims there.)¹⁷⁶

Thus, although closer to Serbia than to the other republics or the federal government, in 1990-91 the JNA leadership still hoped to preserve Yugoslavia as a whole and to avoid civil war, and it was only at a late stage, in summer or autumn 1991, that it fully accepted Serbia's concept of a 'reduced Yugoslavia' including Serbian territories in Croatia. Its interventions in Croatia from spring 1991 onwards were not part of a grand conspiracy to cover 'Serbian territories' in Croatia, but, initially at least, part of a relatively neutral effort to prevent Croat-Serb civil war. Eventually, the JNA leadership did side with Serbia, but there were constant disagreements while Kadijević remained at the helm, as he did throughout the war in Croatia.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Mamula, pp.237-8.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 5, footnote 95.

¹⁷⁷ See both Jović, *op. cit.*, and Vukšić.

4.4. Belgrade's 'Advice' to the Serbs in Croatia

Until at least mid-1991, the JNA rejected Serbia's proposals to 'withdraw' to Serbian borders in Croatia. Did Serbia, then, have an alternative strategy with regard to securing its goals in Croatia that was being pursued in the meantime? What advice or instructions did the Serbian leadership communicate to Serbs in Croatia? The traditional view is that Serbia was constantly pushing radicalisation among Serbs in Croatia, supporting hardliners, opposing negotiations, and helping instigate violence. The various Croat-Serb clashes that began to erupt in Croatia, in particular, have been seen as part of a Serbian conspiracy to bring about civil war and JNA intervention to 'cover' Serbian territories. This section examines whether the available evidence supports such a radical interpretation of Serbian policy.

'Recursive' Secession

From June 1990 onwards Milošević and Jović advocated JNA withdrawal from the bulk of Croatia towards 'Serbian' territories, whose precise borders would then be determined by local referendums. This would be presented as recursive secession – Serbs in Croatia voting to remain in Yugoslavia, which Croatia had left. In the absence of the JNA carrying out the 'cutting off' of Croatia, Serbia's thinking for the Croatian Serbs seems to have been along the same lines, supporting or endorsing their secession from Croatia in response to Croatia's moves towards secession from Yugoslavia. This hardline stance in support of self-determination of nations, and rejection of a confederation, was conveyed publicly from May 1990 onwards, with Serbia advocating the adoption of a law on self-determination to regulate this.¹⁷⁸ The SPS program of July 1990 also gave implicit support to the right of Serbs in Croatia to territorial autonomy, even in a federation.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ See footnote 80.

¹⁷⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Mihailo Marković, T3350-1. Slobodan Vučetić, 'Mirno presabiranje', *NIN*, 28/9/1990, pp.28-30.

Although at first Belgrade's stance was more hardline than that of most Serbs in Croatia, however, the latter soon caught up, and Belgrade ended up more often advocating caution. Sources are more available for the Bosnian Serbs, thanks to the intercepted communications between Karadžić and Milošević, and there Milošević was very clear that moves towards separation should only be taken in response to corresponding moves by the other side. As Milošević said, Yugoslavia 'does exist' and 'the Serbian stance [is] that it will not make or accept any illegal moves that do not respect the constitution'.¹⁸⁰ When the Bosnian Serbs created a Serbian Assembly on 24 October 1991 in response to the Bosnian Assembly's declaration on sovereignty/independence, Milošević therefore urged Karadžić to 'hold back a little on that' and instead form a 'deputies' club' requesting the declaration's revocation. Forming such an assembly, Milošević maintained, would 'be just as illegal' as the declaration.¹⁸¹ Milošević felt similarly about the formation of *Republika Srpska* on 9 January 1992, which he considered 'not very smart' and, he argued, 'had nothing to do with legality'.¹⁸²

For Milošević, it was essential that the Serbs be seen as defenders of the existing order, voting simply to remain in Yugoslavia. As Milošević said to Karadžić, 'Take care, it's dangerous if they think that something new is being created'.¹⁸³ Milošević explained this policy to Serbian mayors in March 1991: Yugoslavia was an internationally recognised country, and preserving 'its legal and national continuity' would prevent foreign intervention in support of the separatists, while those seceding would be 'small state[s]' which would have 'to ask to be recognised all over the world', unlike those remaining in Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁴ Equally significantly, this would enable the largest armed force by far, the

¹⁸⁰ 'Republican Presidents Comments Following Meeting', *Tanjug*, 11/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-072, 15/4/1991.

¹⁸¹ Domovina Intercept: B6846 (Karadžić-Milošević, 24/10/1991).

¹⁸² Domovina Intercept: B7016 (Karadžić-Milošević, 10/1/1992). Also: Domovina Intercept: B6957 (Milošević-Karadžić, 9/7/1991).

¹⁸³ Domovina Intercept: B6984 (Karadžić-Milošević, 30/12/1991). See also: Mihalj Ramač, 'Bilo je to 1991. (17): Kasapnica trećeg svetskog rata', *Danas* (Belgrade), 12/12/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.danas.rs. Dragan Bisenić and Dragiša Pusonjić, 'Let There Be a 'Peaceful Bosnia' in the End', *Borba*, 12/11/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-223, 19/11/1990. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.212.1 (Minutes of SDS BH meeting, 9/10/1991).

¹⁸⁴ ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 124/1991). Karadžić also argued that those remaining, rather than seceding, would do better territorially - 'different criteria apply to the one that secedes': ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.15.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić-Grahovac-Sendić, 16/10/1991).

JNA, to fall into Serbia's hands, as leader of the rump Yugoslavia - the creation of a Serbian army, by contrast, would imply the JNA's disintegration and a division of its assets, and operations of that army in Croatia and Bosnia would be seen as inter-republic aggression.¹⁸⁵ Ideologically, too, Milošević never advocated forming an expanded Greater Serbian state, but rather a 'reduced' Yugoslav federation, even if all its constituent units were Serbian.

For this reason, Belgrade often found itself advocating caution to the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs. Indeed, the only direct evidence I have seen regarding Belgrade's attitude to the proclamation of SAO Krajina is that it advocated waiting until after Croatia passed its new constitution, a major move towards independence.¹⁸⁶ Milošević expressly disagreed with Rašković, and later Babić, over the idea of forming a united Krajina state, of the Croatian and Bosnian Krajinas, largely because it would lose the Serbs their advantage of posing as defenders of the existing order.¹⁸⁷ Milošević also opposed Babić's policy, from April 1991 onwards, of annexing Krajina to Serbia, for similar reasons.¹⁸⁸

Babić's strategy of recursive secession of Krajina from Croatia, pursued from late 1990 to spring 1991, however, evidently matched sentiments in Belgrade, and was certainly not met with opposition. The secession of Krajina in response to moves towards secession by Croatia, framed as a reaction and as 'remaining' in Yugoslavia, seems to have been supported by Serbia.

Domovina Intercept: C2375 (Karadžić-Grkovic-Brdanin, 16/10/1991).

¹⁸⁵ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.344, 346. Domovina Intercepts: B6584 (Karadžić-Brdanin, 2/7/1991); B6957 (Milošević-Karadžić, 9/7/1991). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Borisav Jović, T29279.

¹⁸⁶ Marijana Milosavljević, 'Prof Vojislav Vukčević, Advokat: Šepanje do sledećeg rata', *NIN*, 20/3/1992, p.26.

¹⁸⁷ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.158. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.460.1 (Interview Jovan Rašković, *Društvo*, 22/4/1992).

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 6.

Croat-Serb Negotiations/Violence

One major piece of evidence supports the argument that Belgrade was deliberately instigating conflict in Croatia, which is worth considering even though it is yet to be cited in the secondary literature. The 'Forgotten Testament of Jovan Rašković', published in 2004, is an account by a friend of Rašković's, Serbian journalist Dragan Tanasić, about Rašković's thinking, and interactions with Milošević, in 1990-91.¹⁸⁹ It appears to provide direct evidence of Belgrade orchestrating the conflict in Croatia. Tanasić describes, for example, Milošević hearing of Rašković's idea of a Gandhi march, and immediately calling him to a meeting where he denounced the idea and instructed Rašković to instead destroy Croatian tourism and arrange the murder of uniformed Serbs to blame the Croats.

Much about the 'Testament', however, makes it a very dubious source. At its core it presents a series of events as taking place in close succession, a day or two apart, with direct causal connections between them, connections which are pivotal to its argument that Milošević was orchestrating everything. But the events it describes actually occurred as much as ten months apart, and Tanasić often has them in completely the wrong chronological order, making many of the linkages literally impossible. Tanasić's description of Rašković's allegedly suspicious death, meanwhile, is directly contradicted by Rašković's own daughter, while both she, and Rašković himself, have given accounts of his discussions with Milošević, including over the Gandhi march and the use of force, which lack the highly sensational claims of Tanasić.¹⁹⁰ Milošević had a highly reserved and cautious attitude towards sensitive issues, avoiding written records and even sometimes falsely denying knowledge or involvement to his closest colleagues, so it seems improbable that he would openly and directly advocate criminal and terrorist acts to Rašković, someone with whom, as discussed in Chapter 6, he never had a very

¹⁸⁹ Dragan Tanasić, 'Zaboravljeni testament Jovana Raškovića', *Profil*, No. 47 (Belgrade: 15/4/2004), pp.4-6, accessed 1/8/2014 from www.krajinaforce.com.

¹⁹⁰ Jovan Kesar, 'Jovan Rašković', *Večernji Novosti*, 5/9/2007, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.krajinaforce.com, pp.3-4. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.171.

good relationship.¹⁹¹ It is also unlikely that Milošević even had people capable of carrying out such orders at the time.

Tanasić's claims cannot be completely ruled out, and there were some rumours of such staged attacks, like the Mlinar incident, at the time (from which his claims perhaps derive).¹⁹² But given the very questionable nature of this document, I do not consider it satisfactory evidence for such a pivotal issue - particularly as there is much more reliable, contemporary evidence supporting contrary interpretations of Serbian policy.

Milošević did favour an imposed solution and was thus not generally an advocate of negotiations or seeking a compromise with the Croats. In Belgrade the perception of developments in Croatia was also fairly radical. Serbian officials, and the leading people in Serbian state media, typically supported and justified 'Serbian resistance' to Croatian 'state terror', rather than, for example, viewing this 'resistance' as being also part of the problem.¹⁹³ In a television interview on 11 September 1990 Jović even justified the Knin Serbs' refusal to return arms and said it was logical that they would not do so until 'the causes of the revolt have been eliminated'.¹⁹⁴ Many Serbs in Croatia, including some more moderate parts of the SDS, would in fact have endorsed the return of weapons at that time.¹⁹⁵ In this sense, Jović's position supporting the Serbs in Knin, who in Serbia were generally equated with the Serbs throughout Croatia, was in effect support for a particularly hardline faction of Serbs in Croatia. This was a fairly constant feature of the period.

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 1, footnote 128.

¹⁹² See, for example: Krmpotić, pp.33, 37. Milan Jajčinović, 'Zabava s pucanje', *Danas*, 8/1/1991, pp.10-11. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 55 (JNA report, 10/12/1990), pp.141-2. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.217-8. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P01646 (DB Serbia, report on Arkan, 1/1991).

¹⁹³ For example: 'Državni teror', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.3. Milorad Vučelić, 'Ponovo ustaše', *NIN*, 5/10/1990, pp.8-9. Zečević, p.31. Dragan Barjaktarević, 'Hrvatske paralele: Ustaše i Tuđman', *Intervju*, 17/8/1990, pp.12-14. 'Vojvodina Assembly Assails Croatian 'Terrorism'', *Tanjug*, 9/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-091, 10/5/1991. 'Serbia Lists Demands in Letter to FEC', *Tanjug*, 8/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-090, 9/5/1991. See also Thompson, *Forging War*, pp.65-8.

¹⁹⁴ Aleksandar Milošević, 'Jović's Recipe', *Vjesnik*, 13/9/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-182, 19/9/1990.

¹⁹⁵ All municipal leaderships in Banija-Kordun, for example, opposed such arms seizures later in the month, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Milošević's hardline stance was also conveyed in direct contacts with Croatian Serb leaders – for example, in his already described contacts with Rašković, where the idea of a pacifist march was rejected and Milošević argued that borders were drawn by military boots.¹⁹⁶ SNV Vice-President Mile Dakić similarly recalls how in January 1991 Milošević assured him and Babić that 'The Croats are not going to slaughter you any more', and if necessary Serbia would 'send a million volunteers' and the Croats would regret starting a war. Milošević, Dakić recalls, did not advocate negotiations, but 'always thought that some military option is best'.¹⁹⁷

Serbia's stance was thus clear to the Croatian Serbs, and this must have had some influence in encouraging Croatian Serbs to adopt a similarly hardline approach. But aside from Milošević's major clash with Rašković (detailed in Chapter 6), the Serbian leadership does not seem to have been particularly involved in the minutia of Croatian Serb politics, and some evidence directly contradicts the notion of a deliberate attempt by Belgrade to interfere in Croatia.

For example, the hardline attitude of the official Serbian media meant that critics of negotiations generally received plenty of coverage. When in April 1991 hardliners announced SDS moderate Vukčević's dismissal following negotiations in Zagreb, the announcement was read on Belgrade Radio, which was actually how Vukčević heard of it.¹⁹⁸ But, at the same time, in May 1991 Milošević directly told Džakula (who had taken part in those same negotiations) that talks with the Croats should continue, 'for in this way we at least have a direct insight into their thinking',¹⁹⁹ while Jović even arranged a meeting of Babić and Mesić, in response to the latter's complaints that the Serbian leadership was meeting him without Croatian representatives.²⁰⁰ This suggests that the

¹⁹⁶ Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.171. Kesar, 'Jovan Rašković'.

¹⁹⁷ Interview Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 5/11/2007).

¹⁹⁸ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Vojislav Vukčević.

¹⁹⁹ ICTY-Martić: E-235a (SDS Slavonia meeting, 8/5/1991).

²⁰⁰ BBC-DOY: Babić, p.4. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Stjepan Mesić, T10524-5. RFE, *Svjedoci Raspada: Stipe Mesić. S. Stamatović & Z. Tarle, 'Izjava Babića na izjavu Mesića', Borba, 3/5/1991, p.2. Dinkić, pp.131-2.*

Serbian media's hardline coverage was not necessarily a reflection of a deliberate policy to sabotage negotiations.

Contrary to the usual view of Milošević as master manipulator, he and others in Belgrade do not seem to have been particularly involved in Croatian Serb politics, nor directing the day-to-day reporting of the media. In January 1992, for example, then federal defence secretary Adžić complained that the Belgrade media was giving disproportionate coverage to Krajina statements against the Vance plan, a plan which Milošević was then vigorously struggling to get the Kraginas to approve.²⁰¹ Milošević himself publicly criticised the Serbian media at times - accusing it, for example, of 'systematically [poisoning]' the people with 'intolerance and hatred... towards the other Yugoslav peoples'.²⁰² Although Milošević certainly had some degree of control over the state media,²⁰³ Serbia was not a totalitarian state, and nationalist media coverage evidently had a momentum of its own, capable of influencing the state leadership as well as being influenced by it, even pushing the situation in directions the leadership might not favour.

Moreover, advocacy of a hardline stance does not mean that Serbia was always a protagonist of radicalisation. There were limits and constraints to Serbia's policies. The main limits were international public opinion and the opinion of the JNA, both of which Serbia sought to keep on side. Even while advocating territorial self-determination, certain moves could still be seen as counter-productive, and far from orchestrating every incident in Croatia, there is convincing evidence indicating that key developments in Croatia in 1990 and 1991 took place autonomously of Belgrade and that Serbia was often, in fact, trying to rein in the Serb nationalists in Croatia.

For example, on 17 August 1990, in addition to events in the Knin Krajina, Serbian opposition radicals in Nova Pazova, Serbia, along with SDS leader Dušan Zelenbaba,

²⁰¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1431.E (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 21/1/1992), p.4.

²⁰² Rade Brajević and Miloš Miljković, 'Serbia Wants Peace', *Vecernji Novosti*, 30/12/1991, pp.2-4, in FBIS-EEU-92-020, 30/1/1992.

²⁰³ See, for example: Borisav Jović, *Knjiga o Miloševiću* (ICTY translation), p.15.

rallied in protest at events in Croatia, wearing Chetnik emblems and saying they would go to Knin, reportedly even preparing for departure. Milošević and his allies appear to have been surprised and alarmed by the dramatic escalation of events on 17 August, including these gatherings in Serbia. Milošević, then on holiday in Kupari, Croatia, was in telephone contact with his ally Federal Interior Minister Petar Gračanin. Gračanin appealed to Croatian Interior Minister Josip Boljkovac by phone to call off his operation against Knin and 'do something to prevent the bloodshed' - 'Listen Josip, brotherhood and unity is brotherhood and unity' - and promised to stop volunteers from setting off.²⁰⁴ Jović (also on holiday at the time) subsequently called Gračanin and Serbian Interior Minister Radmilo Bogdanović to have the Chetnik rally disbanded and its participants arrested, or at least to prevent them from leaving for Croatia, as 'we already have too many complications even without them'.²⁰⁵ Two weeks later, meanwhile, Serbian radical Vojislav Šešelj visited Knin and met with Babić, who requested volunteers to help man the barricades. Šešelj tried to enrol volunteers in Belgrade, but was arrested and imprisoned by the Serbian authorities.²⁰⁶

On 1 March 1991, the day before the Pakrac clash, the first major incident in 1991, representatives of the SNV of Eastern Slavonia met with Serbia's Minister for Serbs Outside Serbia, Stanko Cvijan, along with retired general Dušan Pekić, who had good contacts with the Serbian authorities and the Croatian Serbs. The content of this meeting, as recorded by a member of the SNV delegation (and published by him in 1994), provides a real insight into Serbian policy.²⁰⁷ Pekić explained that it was 'vital that the Serbs do not provoke conflict', as 'armed conflict [ie. Croat-Serb clashes] is the last thing the Army could accept', but the army would defend the Serbs if the HDZ attacked. Serbia could not get involved and support the Serbs in Croatia, even through

²⁰⁴ BBC-DOY: Josip Boljkovac, p.7. ICTY-Milošević: T31324. Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani* (ICTY translation), p.161.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.160-1. The rallies were broken up, and also harshly condemned by the Serbian leadership and state media: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1159 (Article in 'Great Serbia', 9/1997). Đurić & Zorić, 'Foreclosing the Other, Building the War', p.70. M. Šašić, 'Separatist Ideas from Croatia and Slovenia Cannot Hinder Yugoslavism', *Politika*, 23/8/1990, p.8, in FBIS-EEU-90-173, 6/9/1990.

²⁰⁶ BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, p.6. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1159 (Article in 'Great Serbia', 9/1997).

²⁰⁷ Petrović, p.52.

the MUP or any sympathetic Serb generals in the army, because the JNA leadership of Kadijević and Brovet would find out and everything would fail as Serbia had meddled – i.e., the army would not side with the Serbs as a result. The Serbs should just prepare for resistance and, insomuch as was possible, arm themselves (something advocated by Pekić already in 1990, and thus not something that was necessarily Serbia's policy, as opposed to Pekić's).²⁰⁸

Pekić had also advised Džakula to reject talks with Zagreb, directing them instead to negotiate with Krajina, and there is evidence that Džakula believed that he had 'agreed with somebody in Belgrade' that the Pakrac Serbs would rebel and, when the Croats reacted, the JNA would intervene as a buffer.²⁰⁹ The fact that Džakula was evidently in contact with Pekić, and following his advice, suggests that this was agreed with him. Their estimate of the JNA, however, was clearly wrong, and it is also possible that this was merely how Džakula justified the rebellion to colleagues (at the aforementioned meeting, Pekić apparently described Pakrac as the 'most endangered' area, without reference to any such plan).²¹⁰

Regardless, the picture of Serbian policy which Pekić presented - cautious about, rather than instigating or directing, any Serbian provocations in Croatia - is supported by a number of other sources. In an interview in 1992, for example, Babić explained how Milošević/Serbia, as well as the JNA, had opposed provocative Krajina police actions he had ordered, in late March 1991 (Plitvice), early May (Bratiskovci) and early June (Udbina).²¹¹ And indeed, immediately before the Plitvice clash Milošević's office had been urgently trying to arrange a meeting with Tuđman, the follow-up to Karadžorđevo.²¹² Babić indicated that it was precisely his suspicion of these Belgrade-

²⁰⁸ Petrović, pp.13-14.

²⁰⁹ Savić claims that the idea was that the JNA would then occupy the whole region, splitting it off from Croatia. ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Goran Hadžić, T9401; Borivoje Savić, T674-6; Vojislav Vukčević, T11086.

²¹⁰ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T9401. Petrović, p.52.

²¹¹ Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993.

²¹² ICTY-Milošević: E-P641.2a (Statement of Hrvoje Šarinić), p.2.

Zagreb negotiations that prompted him to order deployment to Plitvice, leading to the clashes there and the first official deaths of the conflict.²¹³ At the beginning of May Babić then arranged that the Krajina Serbs would rally and march on Plitvice. The Croats saw this as a Krajina Serb effort to re-occupy Plitvice, while the JNA also considered it provocative. Milošević urged Babić to hold the rally on May Day, and as a peaceful picnic instead of a march on Plitvice. (Babić did arrange it for the suggested day, but as a march, along with Šešelj, forcing their way through JNA blockades.)²¹⁴ And when Krajina forces held a demonstrative parade across the Bosnian border in early June, Milošević condemned it privately as 'a stupidity which makes a lot of problems to me and to [us all]'.²¹⁵

In a meeting with Džakula in early May 1991, meanwhile, Milošević's main demand, as recorded in a contemporary SDS document, was that 'we do not get involved in clashes with the MUP anymore, but let them clash with the army, which can deal with the NDH without any problems.'²¹⁶ Džakula confirmed to me that this was, indeed, an explicit and firm demand.²¹⁷ Milošević also reportedly claimed that America could even agree to JNA intervention 'but not civil war', clearly showing how Milošević distinguished between Croat-Serb clashes and JNA intervention to secure Serbian goals, contrary to the standard interpretation that these were two aspects of the same policy, and also how he was taking into account the views of the international community. Milošević, on this occasion, also advocated that talks with the Croats continue, 'for in this way we at least have a direct insight into their thinking'.²¹⁸ This meeting took place just days after the third major incident of 1991: Borovo Selo.

²¹³ Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993.

²¹⁴ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13825. BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, pp.12-13. 'SDS To Proceed With May Day 'Peace' March', *Tanjug*, 30/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-084, 1/5/1991. 'Plitvice Army Blockade Breached by 5,000', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 2/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-086, 3/5/1991. Mihajlo Knežević, pp.42-3.

²¹⁵ Domovina Intercept: B6549 (Karadžić-Milošević, 11/6/1991).

²¹⁶ ICTY-Martić: E-235a (SDS Slavonia meeting, 8/5/1991).

²¹⁷ Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009).

²¹⁸ ICTY-Martić: E-235a (SDS Slavonia meeting, 8/5/1991).

Borovo Selo, Šešelj's Chetniks and Frenki's 'Red Berets'

Borovo Selo was a Serbian village near Vukovar in Eastern Slavonia. After a series of incidents, on 2 May 1991 a large contingent of Croatian police entered the village. Serbs fought back, and in the ensuing fight twelve Croats and three Serbs died. The first such mass incident, this had a major polarising effect in Croatia. It has been widely claimed that Serbia stood behind this clash.

A small number of nationalist volunteers from Serbia - just over a dozen - had taken part in the fighting in Borovo Selo, 'Chetniks' sent by Šešelj in agreement with local Serbs. The main allegation of Serbian involvement is based on Šešelj's claims in the mid-1990s that he had sent his volunteers in agreement with the Serbian MUP/DB. It is also suggested that this collaboration continued in the spring and summer of 1991, with armed Chetnik paramilitaries being sent by Serbia to provoke the descent into war.²¹⁹

However, Šešelj has since denied his previous claims, maintaining that he had been trying to blacken Milošević's reputation with the West. Šešelj is a highly unreliable source, and this unreliability does seem to extend to his earlier accounts. The Serbs of Borovo Selo had probably received some arms from Serbia in April 1991, and the Chetnik volunteers, arriving unarmed, acquired some of those arms when they joined the local defence.²²⁰ But far from Belgrade directing the deployment of these volunteers, contemporary, confidential DB documents show that shortly after the clash Šešelj and his associate Ljubiša Petković initiated contact with the Serbian MUP/DB, who not only refused their requests to give their volunteers arms, but warned them that their activities were extremely counter-productive for the Serbs in Croatia. Convinced, Petković called off the planned sending of further volunteers. The DB then set about investigating their activities.²²¹ In a conversation with Karadžić later that month, meanwhile, Milošević

²¹⁹ See, for example: Šitkovic, p.157. O'Shea, p.9. Judah, pp.177, 185-9. Pribičević, p.197. Sell, pp.137-8. Tanner, p.245.

²²⁰ Vojislav Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Drugi deo* (Belgrade: Srpska Radikalna Stranka, 2010), pp.217, 229-30. See also: Chapter 5, footnote 80.

²²¹ Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Drugi deo*, pp.213-4. Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.92-8. ICTY-

referred to the exaggerated boasts of Šešelj about Chetnik fighters in Borovo Selo as only harming Serbia - 'He's lying. There was no one [from Serbia there]', just 'three of their men... [who] were the first to run for shelter' - while two months later Milošević referred to Šešelj as an American puppet and Serb opposition volunteers as 'fools' and 'jerks'.²²²

Shortly after Borovo Selo the Serbian MUP for the first time established checkpoints along the border with Croatia, and there is evidence that in the months that followed nationalist volunteers only managed to get into Eastern Slavonia by crossing secretly, unarmed and avoiding the Serbian police.²²³ These volunteers were small in number and simply joined local defence structures, not playing any notable role in provoking conflict. It appears that it was only from July 1991 that the stance of the Serbian government – and the JNA - shifted in favour of allowing volunteers, providing they enrolled legally in the police, TO or JNA. An updated defence law was then adopted to that effect.²²⁴ Even in Šešelj's earlier accounts it was actually only in July 1991 that he claimed contact with the Serbian state was established, with all the alleged earlier collaboration being indirect, in that his volunteers acquired arms from locals, who had in turn acquired them from Serbia.²²⁵ And, as Petković, the Šešelj Prosecution's key 'insider' witness, testified in some detail, their contacts in autumn and winter 1991 were mostly with the JNA, rather than officials of Serbia, evidence that is supported by DB

Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3241 (DB Serbia, Official Note relating to Vojislav Šešelj, 10/5/1991). ICTY-Stanišić-Simatović: E-D488 (DB Serbia report, 15/5/1991).

²²² Domovina Intercepts: B6518/B6520 (Karadžić-Milošević, 29/5/1991); B6587 (Karadžić-Milošević, 8/7/1991); B6588 (Karadžić-Milošević, 26/7/1991).

²²³ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-074, Serbian MUP employee; E-P1344a (Interview with Vojislav Šešelj and Nikola Poplasen), p.4. Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, p.134.

²²⁴ It was also around July 1991 that Arkan started his paramilitary unit, with state support. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses DST-074; Radoslav Maksic; E-P1344 (Interview with Vojislav Šešelj and Nikola Poplasen), p.4; E-D1336 (Official Note, Information on Dušan Pekić, DB Serbia, 9/8/1991); E-D1216 (Decree on Registration of Volunteers in TO, R. Serbia, 14/8/1991); E-D67 (Information about Paramilitary Formations, DB Serbia, 1/8/1991); E-P404 (Interview with Radmilo Bogdanović, *Duga*, 12/2/1993). BBC-DOY: Zivota Panić. Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Drugi deo*, p.257.

²²⁵ BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, p.15.

documentation from the time.²²⁶ The popular version of regime-backed volunteers thus seems to be almost an inversion of the real situation.

Another allegation of Serbian involvement in Borovo Selo, made by influential *Vreme* journalist Miloš Vasić, is that people from, or connected to, the Serbian MUP/DB actually took part in the fighting.²²⁷ There is some evidence of contemporary (1991-92) boasts from a few people who were later in the Serbian DB's 'Red Berets', that they had taken part in the fighting in Borovo Selo.²²⁸ However, it seems highly unlikely that these boasts were truthful.

We have a great deal of detailed information on the volunteers who took part in those clashes, and sources on what happened, including contemporary DB documents and Hague witnesses involved in contacts with the Serbian DB in Borovo and elsewhere, and there is no information that Serbian MUP/DB men participated in the clash.²²⁹ These sources even include a 'strictly confidential, return upon reading' report of the Serbian DB on Borovo Selo, from the day after the clash, and a similar report from the Vojvodina DB. The latter details precisely how they heard about what was unfolding there, from various local Serbs making calls to the Vojvodina police, showing that they did not have people on the ground there at the time.²³⁰ The aforementioned May 1991

²²⁶ Statement of Ljubiša Petković, and other evidence, in: ICTY-Šešelj: OTP Closing Brief (5/2/2012), pp.34-6, 71-2. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3222 (DB Serbia, Official note on interview with Ljubiša Petković, 18/9/1991); E-D67 (Information about Paramilitary Formations, DB Serbia, 1/8/1991). Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, p.144. BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, p.13.

²²⁷ Interview Miloš Vasić (Belgrade: 12/7/1991). Filip Švarn, 'Jedinica' (B92 & Vreme, 2003), transcript of Episode 1, accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.b92.net/specijal/jedinica-eng/1_epizoda.php. Miloš Vasić & Filip Švarn, 'Paramilitary Formations in Serbia: 1990-2000', in *Helsinki Files: In the Triangle of the State Power - Army, Police, Paramilitary Units*, (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee, 2001), p.46.

²²⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3152.E, P3008 (DB Serbia documents concerning Predrag Baklajić). ICTY-Krajišnik: Witness Milan Babić, T3379. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1869; E-625 (JNA reports, Knin, 1991). ICTY-Milošević: C-047, T22029-30.

²²⁹ Witness Borivoje Savić, who made many fantastic claims about DB involvement, also did not claim that the DB was involved in the clash, while OTP military expert Reynard Theunens testified that 'I haven't seen any material linking the Serbian MUP... to the incident in Borovo Selo.' ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses Borivoje Savić; Reynard Theunens, T8374; JF-035; JF-032; Borislav Bogunović; Milomir Kovačević; E-D488 (DB Serbia report, 15/5/1991); E-P1158 (*Velika Srbija* article); E-P2449 (DB Serbia, report on paramilitaries, 7/4/1995). ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović). Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.92-8.

²³⁰ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D303 (DB Serbia, Report on Borovo Selo, 3/5/1991). ICTY-

conversation between Karadžić and Milošević also indicates that Milošević did not believe Serbia had played any role in Borovo Selo.

As discussed in Chapter 7, in a 1997 ceremony Frenki gave a grand speech on the history of the 'Red Berets', vastly inflating their role in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, listing and exaggerating all their contributions. And yet he made no mention of any role in Borovo Selo.²³¹ And, despite his allegations - some demonstratively false - against the Serbian DB in the mid-1990s, Šešelj never alleged their participation in this clash.²³² This evidence, and evidence by omission, reminds us of the need to be cautious with rumours and boasts by supposed war heroes.

There is thus convincing evidence that throughout the period of the first major incidents in Croatia in spring 1991 (Pakrac, Plitvice and Borovo Selo), Milošević had a highly cautious attitude towards any Serbian provocations in Croatia. Considering Milošević's 'firm demand' that the Serbs abstain from clashes with the Croats, his opposition even to a peaceful Serb protest march on Plitvice, and Pekić's explanation that it was 'vital that the Serbs do not provoke conflict', it seems highly unlikely that Milošević was, in fact, orchestrating Serb provocations in Croatia in aid of provoking a descent into war.

Of course, Milošević did not really see Serbian violence in Croatia as a problem, considering it to be essentially self-defence.²³³ However, he did apparently advise at least in this period against provocations or clashing with the MUP. One reason for this was surely that the Croatian Serbs were weaker and thus the Croats were usually victorious in such clashes. The main reason, however, appears to have been that provocative Serbian behaviour in Croatia risked alienating both the JNA and the international community, potentially threatening the vital alliance of the army and

Stanišić/Simatović: Submission: Public Versions of Confidential Exhibits Part 2 (2/4/2013), pp.1172-5.

²³¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P61.E (Kula Camp Video, 1997).

²³² Šešelj claimed, for example, based on incorrect information, that the Red Berets led the attack on Zvornik in 1992; they were not even involved.

²³³ See, for example: Domovina Intercept: B6588 (Karadžić-Milošević, 26/7/1991).

Serbia. Rather than any Serbian rebels or paramilitaries, Milošević counted principally on the legal (and, of course, strongest) armed force of Yugoslavia, the JNA, to secure Serbian objectives. This would still mean an essentially military solution, and an imposed one. But Milošević was not directing developments in Croatia, rather just responding to them, and events often in fact developed in ways which he did not support.

Serbian policy does seem to have shifted somewhat over the course of 1991, and by the summer it is likely that Serbia supported some Croatian Serb military efforts, such as the conquest of the Serb-majority Banija region in late July 1991.²³⁴ In the summer Serbian policy also shifted in favour of allowing volunteers, and some regime-connected paramilitaries were even established with official support – most notably, Arkan's Tigers in Eastern Slavonia (though, technically, Arkan declared himself part of the territorial defence, and under the JNA).²³⁵ But the clashes that increasingly erupted in Croatia from autumn 1990 and spring 1991 onwards seem to have had their origins precisely in Croatia, not Belgrade, with Serbia and the JNA following, and reacting to, rather than instigating, these developments.

²³⁴ See, for example: ICTY-Martić: E-622 (Agreement on Further Work, Golubić, 14/6/1991).

²³⁵ See, for example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-074; E-P404 (Interview with Radmilo Bogdanović, *Duga*, 12/2/1993). BBC-DOY: Zivota Panić.

4.5. Conclusions

'Orthodox' narratives on Serbia's role in the descent into war in Croatia place great emphasis on there being a conscious, deliberate and formulated strategy from Belgrade to orchestrate conflict in Croatia and JNA intervention in fulfilment of Serbian goals. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests a different interpretation. From spring 1990 onwards Serbia did have a fundamentally hardline stance towards Croatia, supporting territorial self-determination, a solution it realised would almost certainly have to be imposed on the Croats, probably involving some conflict. Belgrade's public and private espousal of this stance undoubtedly encouraged its adoption by the Croatian Serbs, and Serbia clearly supported the 'recursive' secession of Serbs from Croatia in 1990-91. But Serbia's thinking was based overwhelmingly on an alliance with the JNA to secure this solution, and this alliance was far from complete in 1990-91, with the JNA still hoping to maintain Yugoslavia as a whole and genuinely trying to prevent civil war. And beyond this, Serbia seems to have lacked a conscious, deliberate or formulated strategy towards Croatia. In fact, far from orchestrating the descent into violence, Serbia often advocated caution, precisely because radical moves might alienate the JNA (and the international community) and thus be counter-productive to Serbian goals. The popular image of Milošević as the master manipulator of developments seems misplaced; he did not even have a firm control over many parts of his own regime, let alone the eruption of various incidents in Croatia.

Other common interpretations of Serbia's role – for example, destroying Yugoslavia or 'attacking' Croatia as early as 1989 – also seem to be inaccurate. From the late 1980s Serbia adopted an increasingly nationalist stance towards other republics, including Croatia. But Serbia's sympathies for Serb nationalist attacks on Croatia were probably at least partly a consequence of the snowballing of nationalism in Serbia, rather than a conscious strategy to provoke unrest in Croatia. Moreover, Serbia was, however hypocritically, trying to prevent the complete disintegration of Yugoslavia, even after it abandoned the goal of maintaining the state as a whole, in the first half of 1990.

Although Milošević viewed war as very likely, it would be misleading to say that he had conclusively 'decided' in favour of war to the exclusion of other options. Peaceful solutions were simultaneously being pursued, including a genuine engagement with Tuđman in spring 1991, and there were hopes of international acceptance of Serbian goals, particularly with the development of the idea of 'special status'. JNA intervention to 'cover' Serbian territories remained Milošević's dominant proposal in 1990-91, but strategies of force and negotiations always ran in parallel, and the latter were never completely excluded.

Chapter 5: The Arming of the Serbs in Croatia

A popular view is that Serbia organised and armed, en masse, the Serbian rebels in Croatia, perhaps as early as summer 1990, through an organised operation of the Serbian police, who, in part through their provision of resources, exercised decisive control over the Serbian rebels (a point particularly argued at the ICTY).¹ This is often highlighted as a key component of Belgrade's 'aggression' against Croatia. Serbian arming is seen as the ultimate proof of Serbia's commitment to war, and the chronology of it, before or concurrent with Croatian arming, supports the notion of Serbian 'aggression' and Croatian 'defence'. The role of the Serbian MUP/DB in this, from the start, is key to the claim that Serbia was directing Croatian Serb armed formations. The actions of these Croatian Serb armed formations are then used - for example, at the ICTY - to evidence a Belgrade-directed aggression. This interpretation also has profound implications for our understanding of Krajina-Belgrade relations throughout the period of the RSK's existence, particularly as the main Krajina rebel leader in 1990-91, Milan Martić, was a key personality in the RSK and its President from 1994 to its fall.

A key challenge in examining the arming of the Serbs in Croatia is that this whole issue was rather secretive, and we still lack decisive evidence. A detailed examination, with an open discussion of the sources and an assessment of their reliability, is therefore necessary.

In this chapter I first look at evidence suggesting that the Serbian police was involved in the Krajina, and providing arms there, from an early stage. In particular, I examine the ICTY Prosecution's key witnesses on this issue: protected witness MM-003 and Milan Babić. I then proceed to a largely chronological examination of arming on the Croatian Serb side, before examining the extent to which arming was an organised and centrally

¹ See: OTP Briefs in Milošević, Martić, Hadžić, Stanišić/Simatović cases, and, for example: Cviic, p.207. Judah, pp.170-3. Tanner, pp.234-5. Gagnon, pp.101, 144. Meier, p.155. LeBor p.149. Silber & Little, p.97.

directed operation; considering Western Slavonia as a case study for a detailed examination of arming on the Serbian side; and looking at Croatian Serb attitudes to arms acquisitions, including the extent to which this was initiated externally, by Belgrade, or internally, by Serbs in Croatia. Considering the available evidence on this issue points to quite different conclusions on Serbia's arming of the Serbs in Croatia from those usually made.

5.1. 'Frankie and Badger Go To War'²

Numerous sources confirm that from around April or May 1991 the Serbian DB had a permanent mission in the Krajina, led by Franko “Frenki” Simatović, something which his defence in The Hague itself acknowledged (and is discussed in Chapter 7), and that in autumn 1991 Serbian MUP special forces commander Radovan Stojičić “Badža” went to East Slavonia and took command of local Serb forces there (as detailed in Chapter 8). A number of authors assert, however, that already in June 1990 both Frenki and Badža (or Frankie and Badger, as Tim Judah calls them, anglicising their nicknames) were sent to Knin to direct the organising and arming of Serbian rebel forces.³ *Vreme* journalist Miloš Vasić appears to be the original source for this claim. But he actually told me that arming began around February or March 1991.⁴ And I have not seen any evidence to support Vasić's claim that Badža was *ever* in the Knin Krajina. This particular claim seems to be a myth.

There is, however, some convincing evidence of the Serbian MUP/DB being involved in Krajina from an early stage. Then Serbian Minister of the Interior Radmilo Bogdanović has recalled that 'we had ties with Martić, who was first the commander of the [Krajina] police and then Minister for Internal Affairs. We extended help to enable them to... begin from nothing'.⁵ This was 'help in expertise to Milan Martić to organise the police in Krajina, because they wanted to protect themselves from Boljkovac's police', as well as 'material help'.⁶ Bogdanović has also allegedly 'said that the service began to enter into Krajina in 1990 and that they then, besides others, won over Martić

² Title of a chapter in Tim Judah's 'The Serbs'.

³ Among others: Judah, pp.170-1. Vasić, p.123. LeBor, pp.141-2. CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, pp.25-33. Valentić, p.169.

⁴ Interview Miloš Vasić, *Vreme* journalist (Belgrade: 12/7/2007). Similarly: Miloš Vasić, 'Podmazivanje rata', *Vreme*, 8/12/2005.

⁵ Nenad Stefanovic, 'Logistika službe za volju naroda', *Duga*, 7-20 January 1995, p. 23, quoted in Paul Williams and Norman Cigar, *War Crimes and Individual Responsibility: A Prima Facie Case for the Indictment of Slobodan Milošević* (Washington, D.C.: The Balkan Institute, 1997), footnote 201.

⁶ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P404 (Interview with Radmilo Bogdanović, *Duga*, 12/2/1993).

for their plans'.⁷ In a 1998 report DB official Milan Prodanić, meanwhile, included among his work achievements that:

*From September 1990, I was actively involved in helping the Serbian people in the territory of the Republika Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Apart from performing my regular work duties, I daily dispatched various types of aid and spent time throughout the area from Knin to Beli Manastir.*⁸

Former JNA security chief Aleksandar Vasiljević has also testified that they first had information on Frenki being active in Krajina in around August 1990. Frenki, he has claimed, 'was staying in Krajina', 'monitoring the situation' and 'in contact with Martić... involved in the organisation of Serbs'. This was the only Serbian MUP/DB official that the JNA recorded there that year, however, and elsewhere Vasiljević has noted that locals (Babić, Martić and the SDS) were in charge of rebel organising in the region.⁹ Vasiljević's testimony about Frenki is certainly true from about April 1991 onwards, but other evidence strongly suggests that Frenki was actually operating in Kosovo in this earlier period. In December 1990 he was assigned to Belgrade, and documents show that he was active in intelligence work there, suggesting that he could at most have visited the Krajina, rather than being permanently based there then.¹⁰

The most detailed evidence on an early Serbian MUP/DB role, and arming, comes from OTP witness MM-003, a former associate of Martić, as well as the testimonies of Babić.¹¹ MM-003 was a key witness in the case against Martić and Serbian DB officials Stanišić and Simatović, and along with Babić the Prosecution's only witness testifying

⁷ Kovačević, pp.117-8.

⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2669.E (Letter by M. Prodanić, 9/12/1998). Also, see: Kolšek, p.56. Mihajlo Knežević, pp.125-6.

⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T15789, 16040-1, 16048. ICTY-Karadžić: Statement of Aleksandar Vasiljević, para 71. Vasiljević, p.95.

¹⁰ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2384, E-P2403, E-P2393, E-P2487, E-P2723 (DB Employment Files); Judgement, footnote 2287. ICTY-Milutinovic(et al): E-P2922.E (Statement of Zoran Mijatović), pp.2-3. Filipović, pp.36-7, 48-9.

¹¹ MM-003's function was minor and he did not play an active role in these events (as, for example, a deputy or assistant of Martić). He was, however, constantly around Martić, so it is possible he had the information he testified about.

to the pivotal issue of an early Serbian DB role in Krajina. It is therefore worth giving his testimony full consideration.

MM-003 testified that Martić was in contact with leading DB official Jovica Stanišić, and that secret arms shipments from the Serbian MUP began in September 1990, with Martić collecting them from across the Bosnian border in a 'Lada Niva' car, from the house of the brother of a Serbian MUP official. (As this was a small car, the shipments cannot have been that large.) Around late November 1990 Frenki then arrived, bringing money and some arms (the first of a number of visits), and in January 1991 regular deliveries in trucks direct to Knin began. That month Martić also went to Belgrade and met with Bogdanović and Stanišić, agreeing various assistance including the deployment of the famous 'Captain Dragan' to train Krajina forces.¹²

There are a number of problems with MM-003's account, however. The OTP helped MM-003 relocate outside the former Yugoslavia, and the Trial Chamber in Martić's case itself ruled that his evidence would only be accepted if corroborated by other sources.¹³ MM-003 had a clear incentive to give an account the OTP would appreciate, and displayed evident biases. For example, he claimed to know of a common goal of Martić and the JNA to ethnically cleanse Croatian villages in Krajina, but denied all knowledge of those villages containing Croatian armed forces, something not even contested by the OTP. He then contradicted himself, on cross-examination by Martić's defence, by confirming that Martić bore no ill-will towards Croats or ethnic hatred, and sought to defend them from attacks.¹⁴ In addition, numerous sources on arming in autumn and winter 1990, discussed later, do not report the shipments MM-003 detailed, but do talk

¹² ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-978 (Statement of MM-003).

¹³ ICTY-Martić: Judgement (12/6/2007), p.17.

¹⁴ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003, T2022-3 2102-6, 2189-91. MM-003 brings to mind the Kosovo Albanian victim witnesses against Milošević, who, ICTY Prosecutor Del Ponte and others have now acknowledged, 'disastrously damaged their credibility' by denying any knowledge of the existence of Kosovo Albanian rebels. See: Carla Del Ponte, 'Difficulties for the Participants: Indictment Correct, Trial Impossible', in Timothy William Waters (ed), *The Milošević Trial: An Autopsy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.143. Veton Surroi, 'Conversations with Milošević: Two Meetings, Bloody Hands', in Timothy William Waters (ed), *The Milošević Trial: An Autopsy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.226-7.

of arms deliveries from Kragujevac, Serbia - which some even report MM-003 as being involved in.¹⁵ Yet the witness reported knowledge only of these alleged secret deliveries from Serbia.

One of the most important aspects of MM-003's testimony, meanwhile, was the dates he gave, suggesting an integral Serbian role from a fairly early stage. But the details of much of the developments he described suggest that they could only have taken place months later, making them far less remarkable. Martić meeting Bogdanović and discussing 'Captain Dragan', for example, could not possibly have taken place in January 1991, as it was only in April 1991 that Dragan established contact with Serbian officials.¹⁶

Milan Babić strove in his testimony to connect everything to Serbia, but actually gave convincing evidence that any DB role before spring 1991 was minor. MM-003 was clear that Babić met Frenki when he first arrived, and his and Babić's accounts of Frenki's first appearance correspond. But Babić placed this arrival in April 1991, as do most Krajina sources, not mid or late 1990. As noted in Chapter 3, evidence indicates that Babić was, contrary to his testimony, working closely with Martić in late 1990 and in overall charge of 'resistance' activities. Although he claimed to have seen Stanišić with Martić in late August 1990 - which does seem plausible - the absence of any evidence from him on Frenki having a role prior to April 1991, or of any arms shipments in that period, strongly suggests that any DB role or assistance then was minor.

This conclusion is also supported by Babić's description of a meeting with Milošević and Serbian MUP officials in mid-March 1991 concerning arming. In response to the Krajina officials' complaints that they had received nothing, Bogdanović allegedly responded that he had already sent 500 pieces to Banija. Around May-June 1991,

¹⁵ ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043, SDS official.

¹⁶ ICTY-Stanišić-Simatović: Judgement (20/5/2013), pp.465-7.

meanwhile, Babić claimed he was shown a warehouse of weapons in Knin and told that weapons were indeed flowing from Serbia.¹⁷ Babić tried to imply that arms shipments to the Knin Krajina may have already been taking place before this meeting, without his knowledge, just as 500 pieces had apparently been sent to Banija. But the Krajina officials accompanying Babić to this meeting had been integrally involved in arming in the Knin Krajina, and also knew nothing of any arms from the Serbian MUP. And, as the Stanišić and Simatović defence pointed out in The Hague, it does not really make sense that, when Babić came seeking arms, Belgrade officials did not simply tell him 'Stop wasting our time, Mr. Babić. We have been assisting you for seven months' - if that had indeed been the case.¹⁸

It seems likely that Serbian MUP/DB agents began visiting the region in autumn or winter 1990, established contact with people such as Martić and gave some assistance in arms - but also that any such shipments were likely small (which MM-003 himself reported, concerning the Lada). As these sources are somewhat questionable and this conclusion far from solid, however, it is necessary to consider further sources on the arming of the Serbs in Croatia, and whether there is any significant evidence supporting or refuting this initial conclusion.

¹⁷ A diary entry by Ratko Mladić partly confirms some of Babić's claims about arms deliveries in mid-1991. ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1425 (Mladic Diary, 4/9/1994-28/1/1995), p.103. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13106.

¹⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: T20277-8.

5.2. The Arming of the Krajina Serbs (Autumn-Winter 1990)

In July-August 1990 Croatia had begun forming new paramilitary special units from HDZ activists. Immediately after the 'Balvan Revolution' some arms were distributed to Croats in and around the Krajina, and elsewhere, and from October 1990 to the end of the year between ten and thirty thousand kalashnikovs, and other weapons, were imported and distributed to the HDZ. At the same time, there was the very real prospect of Croatian police intervention and repression in Knin and elsewhere.

In this context and, indeed, from the start of the rise of tensions in Croatia in early 1990, many Serbs in the Krajina felt under threat, and, particularly from autumn 1990 onwards, there was an evident hunger in the Knin Krajina for arms.¹⁹ The question, however, is whether that demand was actually met.

Arming in Krajina (Autumn-Winter 1990)

While there were some preparations for rebellion before 17 August, most organising, and arming, seems to have taken place after that day. Aside from private hunting and trophy arms that Serbs in Krajina already possessed, the main military-type arms the Krajina rebels had in late 1990 were a few hundred police weapons, taken from Knin and other local police stations from 17 August 1990 onwards. By spring 1991, with the formation of the Krajina SUP, this included all police arms still present in the Knin Krajina. The total number of weapons was only in the hundreds, rather than thousands. The Krajina Serbs vigorously defended these weapons from attempts of the Croatian MUP to withdraw them from the region that autumn, which suggests that such arms were not in plentiful supply.

¹⁹ This section looks at the Krajina Serbs, particularly in the Knin region, rather than the Serbs in Croatia as a whole, because sources point to these activities taking place there in this period, but only later elsewhere.

Croatian officials have claimed that the JNA Knin corps had given arms to the Serbs in autumn 1990,²⁰ but most of the evidence I have seen contradicts this.²¹ The commander and chief of staff of the Knin corps were actually a Macedonian and a Slovene in this period,²² and in an incident where local Serbs stole JNA arms from a train the JNA investigated and the weapons were soon returned.²³ The army was actually monitoring the Serbs' arming with their future disarmament in mind, and in January 1991 leading JNA security official Vasiljević came to Knin to persuade the Serbs to hand in their arms.²⁴ Kadijević personally insisted on investigating Serb arming, and on the disarmament of both sides. The initial plan was to arrest both Martić and Babić, and Kadijević even disbelieved Martić's promise that arms would be returned, telling Vasiljević that 'They will cheat you'.²⁵ It is possible, though, that some Serbs had succeeded in persuading some in the JNA to give them some arms illegally, or that individuals inside the JNA were stealing arms in order to sell them for a profit. JNA security officer Mihajlo Knezevic recalls that from early 1991 'Individuals exerted pressure on me to get arms from the warehouses of the JNA', which he refused, but he found out that others already were doing so, that 'armaments [were] being stolen en masse from military warehouses and divided on the ground. The territory of western

²⁰ BBC-DOY: Martin Špegelj, p.1; Stipe Mesić, p.5; Josip Boljkovac, p.1. Boljkovac, p.202. Branimir Glavaš,, 'Iskaz Branimira Glavaša', 9/7/2006, retrieved 1/8/2014 from:

<http://www.branimirglavas.com/>, p.5. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Imra Agotić, T23296-8.

²¹ Vasić, for example, says that the JNA was not arming the Serbs in this period, as do the key 'insiders' involved in Serb arming, who even complained about this fact, while key JNA security figures later involved in arming the Serbs were then reporting on the illegal military organising of the SDS. See: Miloš Vasić & Filip Švarn, 'Paramilitary Formations in Serbia: 1990-2000', in *Helsinki Files: In the Triangle of the State Power - Army, Police, Paramilitary Units*, (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee, 2001), p.44. BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, pp.6-7. Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-978 (Statement of MM-003). HMDC-DR: *Knjiga 1*, Document 21 (JNA report, 3/10/1990), pp.57-8. The recollections of former JNA commander Konrad Kolšek are, though somewhat ambiguous on this question: Kolšek, pp.56, 86, 126, 142. Kolšek cited in Boljkovac, p.340.

²² Hoare, p.33. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, p.114.

²³ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096, Knin police chief, 1990. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.218. V. B., 'Pljačka oružja', *Borba*, 18/10/1990. Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009). 'Stolen Weapons Reportedly Returned', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 19/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-204, 22/10/1990.

²⁴ See: ICTY-Martić: E.872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.216-9. Vasiljević, pp.82, 89-90, 92-7. BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, pp.6-7. Svetislav Spasojević, 'Kadijević zaustavlja akciju 'Štit' [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 17/7/1992, p.56. Svetislav Spasojević, 'Špegelj obala brbljivost [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 7/10/1992, p.56.

²⁵ Vasiljević, pp.89-90, 92-7.

Bosnia and Herzegovina [had become] an enormous market of every kind of armament... [and] in that time prices reached astronomical heights.¹²⁶

A number of different highly informed sources, including Babić in his interview with the BBC in 1994, Vasiljević and others, report that the main source of new weaponry in the region in autumn and winter 1990 was via some deliveries from the *Crvena Zastava* (Red Star) factory in Kragujevac, Serbia.²⁷ 1,300 hunting rifles and 400 pistols were imported up to early December 1990, and this continued in spring 1991.²⁸

These weapons were all bought individually by local Serbs. SDS leaders such as Dušan Zelenbaba publicly advocated that Serbs should sell their cattle to purchase arms - 'If someone has two cows, then he should sell one and buy a Serbian weapon, and sanctify it in the Serbian church!' - and people were reportedly doing this.²⁹ All sorts of arms were being acquired from all sorts of sources, and weapons were selling for extortionate prices in the region.³⁰ In late August 1990 Serbs from Banija brought Martić some

²⁶ Mihajlo Knežević, p.41. Vasiljević also recalls that in the case of the Serb rebellion in Pakrac in February 1991, a local JNA lieutenant-colonel had given the Serbs a 'small quantity' of arms, though he only found this out much later. Vasiljević, p.94.

²⁷ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.216-9. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.16-7. Vasiljević, p.93. ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses Aleksandar Vasiljević; Milan Babić, T13948. ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043, SDS and SNO activist; E-D315 (Mile Bosnić comments on exhibits). ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096. Interviews: Veljko Popović; Lazar Macura; Ratko Ličina; Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). Also mentioned in: Vasić & Švarn, 'Paramilitary Formations in Serbia: 1990-2000', pp.44-45.

²⁸ ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. Snježana Stamatović, 'Narod skuplja pare za miliciju', *Borba*, 9-10/2/1991, p.13. Miloš Vasić et al, 'Dosije Arkan', *Vreme*, 22/1/2000.

²⁹ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.12.1 (Founding of SNV, Banja Luka, 13/10/1990), p.26. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12920-1. Vasiljević, p.93. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.16; Milan Martić, p.6; Aleksandar Vasiljević, p.28. Dušan Glavaš, pp.19-22. ICTY-Martić: Witness Mile Dakić, T10012. Mirjana Tomić, 'El referéndum serbio en Croacia radicaliza la tensión entre Belgrado y Zagreb', *El País*, 21/8/1990. Snježana Stamatović, 'Narod skuplja pare za miliciju', *Borba*, 9-10/2/1991, p.13. Petrović, p.14.

³⁰ Mihajlo Knežević, pp.24, 41. Tea Božuš, 'Ekonomska blokada Knina?', *Borba*, 22/8/1990, p.1. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096; E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). Interviews: Veljko Popović; Lazar Macura; Branko Marijanović (Belgrade: 11/2007). Also: HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 42 (JNA report, 1/4/1991), pp.101-2; Document 55 (Official Note about connections between Arkan and Milan Babić, 31/5/1991), pp.138-9. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 147 (Extracts from *Narodna Armija*, 1990), pp.303-4. Jasna Babić, 'Everyone His Own Sheriff', *Danas*, 23/10/1990,

Second World War arms from a museum, for example, and in Knin's main factory, *Tvik*, they even began manufacturing makeshift guns out of plumbing installations and metalware, based on the memories of elderly Serbs about similar efforts in 1941.³¹ Other weapons were also being bought 'illegally through various channels... sold by different Yugoslav smugglers who would obtain the weapons abroad'.³² Criminals were even buying up old trophy weapons in Serbia and reselling them in Knin for an enormous profit.³³

The Serbs were seeking arms from any source, and, indeed, paying for them. All this strongly indicates that any assistance from the Serbian MUP/DB fell far short of Krajina desires, and, indeed, in late 1990 Martić reportedly 'complained of the problems of how to secure the defence of Knin, and of the shortage of arms and weaponry'. As one journalist noted, 'there was a prevalent hunger for guns among the Serbs' which 'criminals wanted to use'.³⁴

Serbia's Role in Arming (Autumn-Winter 1990)

One criminal who began to involve himself in this field was the future Serbian paramilitary leader Željko Ražnatović "Arkan", who visited Knin in November 1990 to offer his services, and who may have been involved in some weapons smuggling. Arkan was a career criminal who had previously been engaged by the federal security service to murder 'hostile' émigrés. Serbian Interior Minister Bogdanović knew him from their mutual involvement in Belgrade's 'Red Star' football club (and in mid-1991 supported the establishment of his paramilitary 'Tigers'), and there is evidence that Bogdanović

pp.28-29, in FBIS-EER-90-157, 26/11/1990.

³¹ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.16-17. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.20 (Babić Interview), pp.34-5. Zečević, *The uprooting*, p.131. Mate Piskor, 'Journalists in the Service of Politika and Disinformation: Paid to Lie', *Večernji List*, 2/10/1990, p.5, in FBIS-EEU-90-196,10/10/1990. Also: Kapetanović, *Kronologija zbivanja u Republici Hrvatskoj*, pp.14-15.

³² ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990).

³³ Miloš Vasić et al, 'Dosije Arkan', *Vreme*, 22/1/2000.

³⁴ Quoted in Davor Runtić, *Prvi Hrvatski Redarstvenik* (Zagreb: Udruga Prvi Hrvatski Redarstvenik, 2003).

approved Arkan's engagement in Knin.³⁵ However, a highly detailed, confidential contemporary account shows that the assistance Arkan discussed with Knin all involved his own (criminal) resources and Knin's money, apparently without any reference to the Serbian MUP, suggesting that Bogdanović at most permitted or approved Arkan's engagement, rather than standing officially behind him (which, also, suggests that this was not necessarily something approved or ordered by Milošević).³⁶ Regardless, Arkan was arrested by the Croatian police at the end of November 1990 and thus his offer, for now, came to nothing.

SDS figures had, however, established contact with leading members of the Serbian government in autumn/winter 1990, from Milošević to Bogdanović.³⁷ All of the hunting arms from Kragujevac mentioned above were delivered thanks to arrangements with Serbian officials made by Simo Dubajić. The details of these arrangements indicate that Milošević's policy was based on an alliance with the JNA to 'protect' the Krajina Serbs, not the formation or arming of paramilitary units.

Simo Dubajić was a famous partisan from Knin who later became a Serb nationalist dissident and, immediately after the 'Balvan Revolution', offered his services to local Serbs to help organise and arm the rebels. Babić accepted, and Dubajić became a military adviser to the 'Council of National Resistance' (SNO).³⁸

³⁵ Jovica Stanišić interview with ICTY investigators, in: Vojislav Šešelj, *Davolov segrt zločinački rimski papa Jovan Pavle Drugi* (Belgrade: Srpska Radikalna Stranka, 2004), pp.468-9. On Arkan and Bogdanović see, for example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-074; E-P404 (Interview with Radmilo Bogdanović, *Duga*, 12/2/1993).

³⁶ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 55 (Official Note about connections between Arkan and Milan Babić, 31/5/1991), pp.138-9.

³⁷ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.3 (Babić Interview), pp.14-15. Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3.

³⁸ Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009). Supported by: Interview Lazar Macura. Knin VP, 1990-93 (Belgrade: 11/2007). Simo Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Ilija T. Radaković, *Besmislena Yu-ratovanja 1991-1995* (Belgrade: Društvo za istinu o antifašističkoj narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945, 2003), online version, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.znaci.net/00001/23.htm>. Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. Milan Jajčinović, 'Zabava s pucanje', *Danas*, 8/1/1991, pp.10-11. Jasna Babić, 'Iz mraka u mrak', *Danas*, 9/10/1990, pp.14-15.

Dubajić later explained in detail how he arranged these shipments with Serbia. As he recalled, 'When I understood that the Serbs will not acquire any armaments from the JNA, I turned to the Serbian leadership in Belgrade for help'. Sometime between late August and early October 1990 Bogoljub Popović, head of the SDS Security committee and part of the SNO, put him in contact with Bogdanović, and Dubajić first worked on arms with Boro Tomić, then an Assistant Interior Minister of Serbia, who was originally from the Bosnian Krajina. 'Later Kertes, Jovica Stanišić and others entered into the game' - but 'Apart from Boro [Tomić], there was little understanding' and 'We had problems even to acquire hunting carbines', which they had to purchase from *Zastava* 'under pure market conditions' – in fact, at a greatly inflated price. To Dubajić's repeated requests for more substantial armaments (for which the Krajina Serbs were even prepared to pay), to whomever he managed to contact, including the Serbian Prime Minister (from February 1991) Dragutin Zelenović, the response was always given: 'the JNA protects you, you do not need arms'.³⁹

From late 1990 Dubajić was sidelined and by mid-March 1991 he found out that 'professional smugglers' had replaced him.⁴⁰ Thus, some deliveries were continuing, but as far as Dubajić was concerned, it was not enough: as he complained in an open letter to Milošević on 17 March 1991, 'the defence [of Krajina] was reduced to the fluttering of Yugoslav flags and the hope that the army will defend the Serbian nation'.⁴¹

Dubajić's understanding of Serbian policy at the time – a reliance on the JNA, rather than any serious arming, to protect the Krajina Serbs – and his detailing of his interactions with Serbian officials are revelatory. This is particularly as a great deal of

³⁹ Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Radaković.

⁴⁰ Dubajić recalled that in December 1990 Stanišić told him to 'get out of the game'. However, he considered this an 'intrigue from Knin' and ignored him. Dubajić always blamed Knin, and Babić, for his sidelining, and numerous sources confirm their falling out. See: Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Radaković. Simo Dubajić, *Život, greh i kajanje : ispovedna autobiografska hronika* (Belgrade: Vesti, 2006), pp.392-3. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 55 (JNA report, 10/12/1990), pp.141-2. Interviews: Petar Štikovac, President of SDS Executive Board, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 5/8/2007); Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁴¹ Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Radaković.

other evidence supports his account – for example, that the key arms shipments in the region, which he arranged, were actually paid for by the Krajina Serbs at inflated prices.⁴² Babić himself testified that whenever he met Milošević and expressed his concern over Krajina's security, Milošević always repeated the same stance, from at least January 1991 if not earlier: they need not worry, as the JNA would protect them if the Croats attacked, and would guarantee their rights. Goran Hadžić has, similarly, recalled that at a large meeting of Croatian Serbs with Milošević in early 1991, Milošević assured them that there was no need for 'exodus' or 'panic', as 'the JNA could protect [them]'. Jović had given the same advice to Babić's SNV delegation in August 1990, and the implication was clear: the Serbs did not need to arm or form their own forces, as they could count on the JNA.⁴³ Several sources confirm that Babić thought similarly at the time – although he endorsed the desire of people to acquire arms for defence, he did not advocate the creation of a full Krajina military organisation, on the grounds that the JNA would defend them (as JNA activities on 17 August had seemed to confirm).⁴⁴

Robert Donia has recently reached the same conclusion on Belgrade's policy: 'Sometime before 1991, Milošević had decided to support a unified JNA and to oppose formation of separate Serb forces.'⁴⁵ SPS Vice-President Mihajlo Marković explained part of the rationale for this during the war in 1991: 'It is in our vital interest that the defence of the Serbian nation in Croatia is conducted by the [JNA]', as it was 'its responsibility according to both our laws and international standards', and this would prevent accusations that Serbia 'participates in an aggression against the republic of Croatia',

⁴² Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. See footnote 27. Contrast with: Špegelj, *Sjecanje vojnika*, pp.104-5.

⁴³ ICTY-Babić: E-PS.2.12 (Babić Interview), pp.3-7; E-PS.2.14 (Babić Interview), p.54. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T1505-6. Filip Švarn et al, 'Put bez povratka', *Vreme*, 18/10/2001. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T9700.

⁴⁴ Očić, *Hronika Republike Srpske Krajine 1989-1995* (Belgrade: Sava Mrkalj & Zora, 1996), retrieved 1/11/2011 from www.krajinaforce.com, p.4. Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Radaković. Interviews of SDS officials Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac and Veljko Popović (Belgrade: 2007), and Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). 'Neodgovorni ministar', *Borba*, 8-9/12/1990, p.14.

⁴⁵ Donia, p.93.

which the formation of a separate Serbian army would bring.⁴⁶ Karadžić was close to Milošević in 1991,⁴⁷ and he clearly explained this policy at a meeting of the Bosnian SDS leadership in February 1991: 'Replying to a question whether we could trust the army, Karadžić said he trusted it. The SDS should not take any step that would provoke the army. That is why paramilitary organisations cannot be formed.'⁴⁸

This is not to say that the Serbian leadership viewed the acquisition of arms by Krajina Serbs particularly negatively. As early as July 1990, in fact, Jović had urged Kadijević to accede to Krajina Serb requests to arm them (a proposal Kadijević rejected).⁴⁹ Serbia advocated that the JNA 'protect' the Krajina Serbs, and the JNA providing them with arms could be part of that. However, bypassing the JNA, the legal armed forces of the country, to illegally arm new Krajina Serb units, could risk alienating the JNA, and thus run significantly counter to Serbian objectives. And if the JNA would in fact protect the Krajina Serbs and their right to self-determination, then such illegal arming would be unnecessary.

Thus, in autumn and winter 1990 there was a hunger in Krajina for arms, but assistance from Serbia in this respect was minor, mainly involving the selling of some hunting weapons. Serbia assured the Krajina Serbs that they would be protected by the JNA, and therefore did not need their own military organisation, and these assurances were in large part accepted, though weapons were still sought for defence (as the Krajina Serbs saw it). In this period, in which Croatia imported and distributed at least ten thousand, and possibly several tens of thousands, of automatic weapons, the Krajina Serbs acquired just a few thousand hunting weapons, something which is worth bearing in mind when considering 'Serbian aggression' and Croatian 'defence'.

⁴⁶ Mihalj Ramač, 'Bilo je to 1991. (17): Kasapnica trećeg svetskog rata', *Danas* (Belgrade), 12/12/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.danas.rs. See also: Domovina Intercept: B6584 (Karadžić-Brdanin, 2/7/1991). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Borisav Jović, T29279.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 6.

⁴⁸ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64a.183.1 (Notebook of Vojislav Maksimović, Bosnian SDS official), p.8.

⁴⁹ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.152-3.

5.3. The Shift to Arming (Spring 1991)

A number of sources support the idea that in spring 1991 there was a shift in Serbian policy, that increasing demands from Krajina for arms finally met with a positive response, and that assistance then followed. Key to this shift appears to have been the JNA's public revelation, in January 1991, of the full extent of Croatian arming, followed by the failure of the JNA to secure the disarmament of Croatian formations. It was, apparently, after the last serious attempt to disarm the Croats failed in mid-March 1991 that large-scale arming of the Serbs in Croatia began.

Although we lack any 'smoking gun' evidence on this secretive issue, there are a large number of different, independently corresponding sources which support the conclusion that mass arming only took place from spring 1991 onwards and which are inconsistent with the idea of an earlier mass arming operation.

The Failure of Disarmament

In January 1991 the JNA handed a report on illegal arming and paramilitary organising in Yugoslavia to the Yugoslav Presidency, proposing the paramilitaries' disarmament and dissolution. The JNA also released a propaganda film, based on secret recordings of Croatian officials, showing the full extent of Croatian paramilitary organising and arming and their allegedly hostile intentions towards Serbs in Croatia and the JNA.⁵⁰

The Yugoslav Presidency then adopted a decision on disarming such formations. The focus of the JNA's effort was on Croatian formations, but its report also detailed the situation in Krajina, and Vasiljević came to Knin to persuade Martić to hand in at least some of his weapons, threatening Martić with arrest if he refused. Most of the arms of the Knin police were indeed returned to the station and then handed to the JNA (though

⁵⁰ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.216-9. 'Throwing Bombs, Killing...!', *Politika*, 27/1/1991, pp.6-7, in FBIS-EER-91-018, 11/2/1991.

the arms Serbs had bought, and others, were not).⁵¹ Babić and the Krajina leadership declared their support for the initiative, and emphasised that the Serbs were placing their faith in the JNA to disarm Croatian forces and/or protect the Serbs.⁵²

The Croatian side refused to disarm, however. Soon the JNA backed down and the whole initiative was largely abandoned. Krajina Serb leaders consequently expressed ever increasing dissatisfaction with the situation and, as the Croats had not been disarmed, began to advocate publicly that the Serbs be armed by the JNA. In January 1991 Babić's Krajina SDS had emphasised that 'The Serbian nation in Croatia does not need parallel armed formations, nor has the SDS armed, nor will arm, members of its party'.⁵³ Subsequently, however, in February and March there were repeated public calls by Babić and others for either Croat formations to be disarmed or the Serbs of Krajina to be armed by the JNA.⁵⁴ The return of the Knin police arms from the JNA was also requested, but until April 1991 no response was received.⁵⁵ By March Martić noted that 'the people have to a certain extent lost their faith in the army' because 'the taking of arms of the Serbs was not followed by an identical action' taking arms from the HDZ, and they had been 'tricked', while Babić complained that they were 'ignored' and 'deceived' by federal organs 'whose constitutional duty it is to protect us as citizens and as a nation of this country'.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Drago Hedl, 'Zašto nismo uhapsili Špegelja', *Feral Tribune*, 24/3/2006, pp.8-11. Svetislav Spasojević, 'Kadijević zaustavlja akciju 'Štit' [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 17/7/1992, p.56. BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, pp.6-7. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). 'Oružje predato vojsci', *Borba*, 19-20/1/1991, p.15. Reuf Mirko Kapetanović, *Kronologija zbivanja u Republici Hrvatskoj, 1989.-1995.* (Zagreb: Informator, 1995), p.15. 'Defense Secretariat on Arms Handed in by Deadline', *Tanjug*, 5/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-025, 6/2/1991.

⁵² S. Stamatović, 'Zbunjenost u Kninu', *Borba*, 21/1/1991, p.5. S. Stamatović, 'Čeka se potez Predsedništva SRFJ', *Borba*, 23/1/1991, p.5. S. Stamatović, 'Neizvesnost ništa manja', *Borba*, 30/1/1991, p.2.

⁵³ S. Stamatović, 'Prvi miran san', *Borba*, 11/1/1991, p.2.

⁵⁴ Snežana Stamatović, 'Strah i nepoverenje', *Borba*, 1/2/1991, p.3. S. Stamatović, 'Srbi u jednoj državi', *Borba*, 4/2/1991, p.2. S. Stamatović & Z. Tarle, 'Knin ne može pasti', *Borba*, 6/3/1991, p.2. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p.106. Also: Nobilo & Letica, p.111.

⁵⁵ Stefan Grubač & Luka Mičeta, 'Srpska država – imperativ', *NIN*, 22/3/1991, pp.17-18. Svetislav Spasojević, 'Kadijević zaustavlja akciju 'Štit' [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 17/7/1992, p.56. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁵⁶ Stefan Grubač & Luka Mičeta, 'Srpska država – imperativ', *NIN*, 22/3/1991, pp.17-18.

In mid-March 1991 the JNA then made a final attempt to force Yugoslav-wide disarmament. Its failure, through deadlock in the Yugoslav Presidency, seems to have brought further disappointment, and, for the Krajina Serbs, cast doubt on Milošević's promises of JNA protection: 'we had already seen what the situation was, his guarantee that it would be the JNA that would protect us was no good' (Babić).⁵⁷ In mid-March 1991 Dragan Vasiljkovic, later famous as Krajina special forces instructor 'Captain Dragan' (see Chapter 7), visited Krajina and met with Martić. According to Dragan, Martić complained that 'We need money. We need equipment. We need political support. We need everything. We are endangered here, and also we are encircled'.⁵⁸ As Dragan reported in an (intercepted) telephone conversation on 29 March, 'They are in very difficult situation because they did not receive the assistance that they expected. There seems to be a very tense relationship between themselves and Milošević, and they feel that Milošević and the Serbian opposition have turned their backs on them'.⁵⁹ Reports of both the Croatian police and the JNA also show that at the time of the Plitvice clash on 31 March 1991, the Krajina Serbs were still lacking serious armaments.⁶⁰ As Dubajić complained in his open letter to Milošević at the time, Krajina's defence had been reduced to 'the hope that the army will defend the Serbian nation when it surrenders arms, which you and Jović recommended'.⁶¹

Belgrade's Promise

Around 20 March 1991, Babić requested a meeting with Milošević. In light of the arming of Croatia, the fact that Croatia and Krajina were 'on the brink of a conflict' in which the Krajina Serbs 'would be the weaker party', and the recent failure of the

⁵⁷ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1810. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.12 (Babić Interview), pp.5-6.

⁵⁸ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16467.

⁵⁹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: T15647.

⁶⁰ 'Sudski dokumenti – Srpski zlocini u Hrvatskoj – Korenica KA 0017', retrieved 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.ljepanasadomovinahrvatska.com/dokumenti-mainmenu-70/srpski-zlocini-u-hrvatskoj/3703-korenica-ka-0017>. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1155 (Analysis of Croatian MUP operations in Plitvice, 31/3/1991). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 42 (JNA report, 1/4/1991), pp.101-2. Also: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1181 ('The Confession of Chetnik Duke Rade Cubrilo', *Velika Srbija*, 20/3/1996), p.4.

⁶¹ Simo Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Radaković.

Yugoslav Presidency to pass a decision on the engagement of the JNA, he wanted an answer as to how, concretely, Milošević would help or protect the Krajina Serbs. And according to Babić, Milošević at this meeting for the first time stated that he would arm the Krajina Serbs.⁶²

There were actually open indications at the time of a Serbian promise or decision to arm the Serbs in Croatia. Jović opened a session of the Yugoslav Presidency on 15 March 1991 with a warning that, if the Presidency did not approve the JNA's engagement, then Serbia concluded that it would 'come to mass demands for a Serbian army, for arming of the Serbian nation and [it would come] to the creation of a Serbian army', which they 'will not be able to stand in the way of.' The leadership of Serbia, Jović warned, had to stand with the Serbian nation, and 'has to secure its defence, if the army is not in a position to defend it'.⁶³ On 19 March, meanwhile, Milošević openly told Belgrade students: 'I informed the Presidency members that if the paramilitary formations in Croatia are not disarmed, we shall not arm the Serbs illegally but quite legally because we have no right to wait to see defenceless people experience once again the same fate [as in the NDH]'.⁶⁴

Statements of Krajina officials immediately after the Plitvice clash of 31 March 1991 indicate an understanding that Belgrade had now promised them armaments, and that this 'promise' was yet to be fulfilled. For example, on 1 April SAOK publicly called on the forces of the Serbian MUP to assist the Krajina SUP, with 'technical and personnel assistance', and an open letter to this effect was sent.⁶⁵ As Babić later recalled, his purpose with this letter was to remind Milošević to implement his promise: to arm the Krajina.⁶⁶ On the same day, about 2,000 people gathered in Knin seeking arms.⁶⁷ The

⁶² ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.18 (Babić Interview), pp.37-41. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1526, 1809-10.

⁶³ Nikolić & Petrović, *Od mira do rata*, p.384.

⁶⁴ 'Serbian President Milošević's Political Views', *Tanjug*, 19/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-054, 20/3/1991. Also: ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 124/1991).

⁶⁵ ICTY-Martić: E-29 (SAOK Letter to Serbia, 1/4/1991).

⁶⁶ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1526, 1808-9. British journalist Marcus Tanner noted this at the time: Marcus Tanner, 'Croatia rebels declare unity with Serbia', *The Independent (London)*, 2/4/1991.

⁶⁷ 'Knin Residents Protest Army "Delay"', *Tanjug*, 1/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-062, 1/4/1991.

crowd was told to disperse 'because there was no-one to give them arms at the moment,'⁶⁸ but Martić asked them to make a list of everyone who wanted arms and assured them they would receive them, as Milošević 'has promised that he would send arms to the Krajina'.⁶⁹

As far as Krajina officials were concerned, Serbia's promise had not yet been implemented - as Martić said, 'now it is up to Milošević to keep his promise and supply us with arms'.⁷⁰ As Babić testified, weapons did arrive thereafter, which would explain why public demands for arms abated. Indeed, from April 1991 onwards Krajina set about organising its military forces, and by July 1991 had formed new special police units and a Krajina territorial defence. By this point, Martić and others were boasting of Krajina forces' strength, and demonstrating this in some successful attacks on Croatian forces. As Martić said in early July 1991, 'We are not short of weapons', and 'The situation [with regard to weaponry] changed significantly over the last few months'.⁷¹

The Shift in Belgrade

In March 1991, with the failure of the last real attempt of the JNA to assert control over the whole country, Serbia publicly raised the issue of arming the Serbs in Croatia, and Milošević for the first time spoke about this with Babić, rather than promising protection from the JNA. (The March 1991 mass demonstrations against Milošević in Belgrade may also have influenced the leadership to act more decisively in favour of the Serbs in Croatia, as authors such as Gordy suggest, as the Serbian leadership clearly pushed for the focus to be on events in Croatia, and the need for unity, rather than democratisation, in Serbia.)⁷²

⁶⁸ 'Official Promises To Arm Civilians', *Tanjug*, 1/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-063, 2/4/1991.

⁶⁹ 'Serbs Volunteer To Bear Arms in Krajina', *Tanjug*, 2/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-064, 3/4/1991.

⁷⁰ Dessa Trevisan & Tim Judah, 'More troops deployed in Croatia', *The Times*, 4/4/1991. Also: Dessa Trevisan, 'Croat police given army ultimatum', *The Times*, 3/4/1991. Marcus Tanner, 'Fear of spies haunts a Balkan fortress', *The Observer*, 14/4/1991. 'Krajina Official on Expelling Croatian Police', *Tanjug*, 3/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-065, 4/4/1991.

⁷¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D312 (Martić Interview in *Pobjeda*, 7/7/1991).

⁷² Gordy, *The Culture of Power*, pp.37, 43-4. Caplan, p.119. See for example: S. Kljakic et al, 'Let's Be Reasonable, Brother Deputies', *Politika*, 13/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-058, 26/3/1991. ICTY-

Despite Milošević and Jović's promises, 'protection' from the JNA had always been somewhat uncertain, as the JNA did not wish to be seen as pro-Serb. On 5 April 1991, Milošević and Jović again sought an answer from JNA leaders on whether they would defend Knin in an attack, as '[the Serbian nation] has not armed itself but is instead counting on protection by the JNA, while Croatia has armed its own pro-Ustasha secessionist units'.⁷³ JNA leaders finally promised that they would defend the Serbs in Croatia without waiting for Presidency authorisation. Jović was still doubtful – and, indeed, as late as June 1991 Adžić was still disputing the idea of 'protecting' the Serbs in Croatia - but he did feel that they had 'crossed the Rubicon'.⁷⁴

This promise from the JNA leadership partly superseded Milošević and Jović's public statements about the need to arm the Serbs, and, according to Babić, Milošević soon returned to his promises of JNA protection.⁷⁵ Relying on the JNA remained the core Serbian policy. As Jović noted in March 1991, 'Defending the Serb nation's right to self-determination is realistically impossible without the JNA, because the Serb nation is not armed.'⁷⁶ However, Jović later acknowledged to the BBC that he and Milošević had, then, decided 'to close our eyes as far as the arming of the Serbs was concerned', and it does seem that Serbia decided to give more substantial assistance to the arming and military organising of the Serbs in Croatia.⁷⁷

Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13109. ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 12/4/1991).

⁷³ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.283.

⁷⁴ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.303-4.

⁷⁵ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T1505-6.

⁷⁶ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.279.

⁷⁷ Silber & Little, p.145. Also see: 'Meets Press on Crisis', *Tanjug*, 8/7/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-131, 9/7/1991.

5.4. The Arming of the Croatian Serbs (Spring-Autumn 1991)

Following the final failure to disarm Croatian forces and the shift in policy in Belgrade in spring 1991, more significant arming of the Serbs in Croatia took place. It seems, however, that arming from the JNA soon far outstripped that from the Serbian MUP/DB. Evidence on arming in this period further reinforces the conclusion that large-scale arming had not happened prior to that point.

It is clear that Serbia supported Krajina efforts to improve their forces from April 1991 onwards (discussed in Chapter 7), and most concrete evidence on arming from Serbia concerns spring 1991 onwards, as Babić's own testimony indicated. A document of the Serbian MUP dated 12 April 1991 records two deliveries totaling 1,450 weapons to Knin in the previous ten days, a very significant quantity,⁷⁸ and a number of sources indicate that such deliveries to Krajina took place that spring and summer.⁷⁹ Numerous 'insider' sources place the first arming from Serbia in Eastern Slavonia as being in March or April 1991, and serial numbers on some of those arms were traced to TO and police stocks in Serbia.⁸⁰ Serbia's Defence Minister in 1991 has confirmed that arms from Serbian TO stocks – old weapons taken out of commission by the JNA, such as Thompsons and Spagins - were sent to Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia at some point,⁸¹ and various sources report, for example, the Serbian police giving Serbs in East Slavonia

⁷⁸ It is interesting that the details of this delivery correspond fairly well with MM-003's description of the first major delivery, though he placed this months earlier. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2290 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 12/4/1991).

⁷⁹ ICTY-Martić: E-44E (SAOK DB report, 11/6/1991); E-620 (Captain Dragan report, 1991); E-499 (Report by Frenki, 28/7/1991); E-537 (Report of Association of Serbs from Croatia, 8/8/1991). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D273 (DB Serbia report, 18/7/1991); E-D312 (Martić Interview in *Pobjeda*, 7/7/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-P600 (Witness Statement of Miroslav Deronjić). Domovina Intercepts: B6575 (Karadžić-Kertes, 24/7/1991); B6570, B6567 (Karadžić-Kertes, 24/6/1991).

⁸⁰ BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, pp.12, 14, 40. ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses C-013; C-020; C-025, T14119; Aleksandar Vasiljević, T15778, 16038. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-035; Borislav Bogunović, T6018-25; JF-032; JF-035. Drago Hedl, 'Zašto nismo uhapsili Špegelja [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *Feral Tribune*, 24/3/2006, pp.8-11. Also: Silber and Little, p.142. Miloš Vasić and Filip Švarn, 'The Chetniks' Watergate', *Vreme News Digest Agency*, 15/11/1993. Miloš Vasić, 'Podmazivanje rata', *Vreme*, 8/12/2005. Jovica Stanišić interview with OTP, in: Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.680.

⁸¹ ICTY-Strugar: Witness Miodrag Jokić, Serbian Defence Minister in 1991, T4352-3.

arms in summer 1991.⁸² Communications equipment was also given to the Krajina SUP, and, in late April 1991, four Landrovers.⁸³

In his interview with the BBC in 1994 Milan Martić recalled that Milošević 'in a certain way gave us support to a defence with weapons', as JNA and police circles 'got signals to get ready for war', which 'meant we would be getting weapons, and other logistic and material needs'. The weapons, he claimed, 'came from JNA garrisons nearby... not from Serbia', via 'JNA officers that were either Serbs or Yugoslavs'.⁸⁴ Martić's account seems to be reasonably accurate, and there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that local JNA depots were the main source of arms for the Krajina Serbs.⁸⁵

In a private account written in 1994 JNA security officer Dušan Smiljanić claimed that in late April 1991 he began arming the Krajina from JNA depots, distributing 'about 15,000 assorted infantry weapons, mortars, anti-aircraft weapons and a large quantity of ammunition' by early June 1991, 'which we judged was decisive in the defence of Lika, Kordun and Banija'. In July 1991 he organised 'the transport of over 20,000 weapons' from Ogulin, Croatia, to the Bosnian Krajina, and from August to October 1991 'distributed or withdrew... about 20,000 assorted weapons' from parts of Croatia.⁸⁶ Other sources, including Milan Babić and JNA commander Konrad Kolšek, confirm Smiljanić's activities, and that this was part of a JNA security team mandated from the top, although operating in secret and without the knowledge of much of the JNA (including Kolšek).⁸⁷

⁸² ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P553 (Statement of Borislav Bogunović, SAO-SBZS Interior Minister, 1991); Witnesses JF-032, JF-030, Milomir Kovačević. ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-013. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Vol.2: Annexes 1-41', 20/12/2010, Annex 8 (Witness Statement of Ž. Č.), pp.27-8. Also: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D273 (DB Serbia report, 18/7/1991).

⁸³ ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Radoslav Maksić; MM-003. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3004 (Request for Interview with Uroš Pokrajac, BH MUP, 17/6/1991); E-P2615 (Statement of Milenko Sučević, 7/5/1992). Also: Degoricija, p.48.

⁸⁴ BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, pp.7-8.

⁸⁵ Former JNA 5th military district commander Kolšek quotes Martić's statement, seemingly confirming its accuracy, and it corresponds with Babić's BBC interview. Kolšek, pp.126, 142. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.16-17. Other sources: ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16603. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: T11311; Witness DST-043, T12939-40. Mihajlo Knežević, p.41.

⁸⁶ ICTY-Milošević: E-P350.3a (Letter from Col. Dušan Smiljanić, 16/10/1994).

⁸⁷ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1531-3. ICTY-Krajišnik: Witness Milan Babić, T3376-7.

Former JNA security chief Aleksandar Vasiljević is a key source for the claims of the Serbian MUP/DB role in Croatia. But although very coy about the role of JNA security in the arming of the Serbs, he effectively confirmed their decisive role. According to Vasiljević, it was in mid-March 1991 that the Serbs in Croatia, 'who until then were poorly armed', began to arm en masse – as the SFRY Presidency was unable to disarm the Croats, they 'had no choice but to organise themselves in order to protect themselves.' Serbia decided to support the Serbs in Croatia at this point, he maintains.⁸⁸ But whereas Vasiljević claimed that the Serbian MUP armed Serb forces in East Slavonia, for Krajina itself he has suggested that they sent only a few hundred pieces, and seemed to confirm that the Krajina was armed by the JNA, characterising it as the formation and arming of the territorial defence in the region.⁸⁹

It is likely that Smiljanić exaggerated somewhat, and the first 15,000 weapons were, at least in part, merely moved from depots in Croatian to Serbian areas, out of reach of Croatian forces, and only later distributed to the TO, in the summer or autumn.⁹⁰ Krajina certainly did not have 15,000 men under arms in June 1991, and even in July 1991 and later some problems with lack of arms were noted.⁹¹ But Krajina DB chief Orlović confirms they were allowed to take back the Knin police weapons from the JNA in April

Kolšek, pp.126. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Mustafa Čandić; E-P350.4a (Statement of Mustafa Čandić). ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – Regional Files – Vol.2, Part III: Kordun and Lika and Dalmatia', 1/3/2001, Annex 339 (Witness Statement of Mustafa Čandić), pp.33-35. Annex 340 (Witness Statement of S. Š.), p.36. Mamula, p.238. Mihajlo Knežević, pp.87, 139. Also see: footnotes 119-14.

⁸⁸ ICTY-Karadžić: Statement of Aleksandar Vasiljević, para 85, 71. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T8071. Milošević and Jović in The Hague also said Serbs began to arm themselves after the failure of disarmament. ICTY-Milošević: T29293-4.

⁸⁹ 'Lovas Case', Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević (Belgrade: 21/6/2010), accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/Transkripti/lovas.html>, pp.4, 12-13, 22, 86. BBC-DOY: Aleksandar Vasiljević, p.29. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T15778-9. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T8073-4. ICTY-Karadžić: Statement of Aleksandar Vasiljević, Para 71. Also: Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.325, 340.

⁹⁰ Interviews: Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina State Security (DB), 1991-92 (Belgrade: 7/2009); Petar Ajdinović, JNA security officer (Belgrade: 6/2011). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević, T15778-9. Mihajlo Knežević, p.41.

⁹¹ Dušan Glavaš, pp.42-54. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 62 (JNA security report, 14/6/1991), p. 150; Document 71 (Daily intelligence report, 2/7/1991), p.171; Document 105 (JNA report, 7/1991), pp.222-3; *Knjiga 4*, Document 110 (Report of Glina War Presidency, 2/6/1992), pp.323-4. Degoricija, p.56. ICTY-Martić: Witness Mile Dakić, T10013-4. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1100 (Wartime experience of 13th Infantry Brigade of SVK in Slunj, 3/8/1994); E-D109 (Report on Benkovac TO, 25/11/1991). CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, p.71.

1991, after Plitvice,⁹² and JNA assistance to Serbian forces had certainly begun by June,⁹³ and in a large-scale fashion by July, something which numerous sources independently describe.⁹⁴ (The JNA also began arming Bosnian Serb territorial defence units from about July 1991 onwards.)⁹⁵

Organised and Disorganised Arming

At the ICTY, and in many published works, the arming of the Serbs has been presented as a highly organised and directed operation, part of Belgrade's 'joint criminal enterprise' for war in Croatia, with the initiative coming from Belgrade (i.e. Milošević).⁹⁶ Much evidence suggests, however, that the arming of the Serbs in Croatia was somewhat disorganised and often driven by local requests rather than decisions in Belgrade, with a marked lack of co-ordination between the various actors, and intermediaries, involved.

Arming definitely varied by region, depending on local requests and the attitude of local JNA officials. For example, Kostajnica in Banija was still not properly armed in July 1991, and the local JNA refused to arm local Serbs on the grounds that they were

⁹² Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). Svetislav Spasojević, 'Kadijević zaustavlja akciju 'Štit' [Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević]', *NIN*, 17/7/1992, p.56

⁹³ ICTY-Martić: E-44E (SAOK DB report, 11/6/1991). Or May: Degoricija, p.72.

⁹⁴ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 79 (Krajina DB report, Korenica, 19/7/1991), pp.180-1. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Vol.1', 20/12/2010, pp.137-40; 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Vol.2: Annexes 1-41', 20/12/2010, Annex 28 (Witness Statement of M.Ž.), p.156; 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 146D ('What to do with the Serbs of Gorski Kotar', 17/4/1994), pp.293-7; 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – Regional Files – Vol.2, Part III: Kordun and Lika and Dalmatia', 1/3/2001, Annex 338 (Witness Statement of D.T.), pp.29-33; Annex 340 (Witness Statement of S. Š.), p.36. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Submission: Public Versions of Confidential Exhibits Part 1 (2/4/2013), pp.4, 228-9; Witness Borislav Bogunović, T6018-25. ICTY-Martić: E-73 (Wartime Record of Plaški Brigade, 1995); Witness Nikola Medaković, T9112-3. ICTY-Milošević: E-P328.3 (Incidents of Joint Actions by JNA and Terrorists). 'Iz knjige Ivana Stržića: Ogulinski kraj u Domovinskom Ratu', 2/10/2014, accessed 1/12/2014 from: <http://www.saborsko.net/index.php/arhiva/2289-isokudr>. Degoricija, p.73.

⁹⁵ See, for example: ICTY-Milošević: E-P600 (Witness Statement of Miroslav Deronjić). ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P48.1 (Diary of Petar Janković); E-P51 (Report of Milutin Kukanjac, 19/3/1992). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D958 (Banja Luka SUP report, 6/9/1991), p.7; E-D1675 (Report of SR BH Territorial Defence, 18/2/1992); Witness Osman Selak, T17374.

⁹⁶ See ICTY OTP Briefs in Milošević, Martić and Stanišić/Simatović, and, for example: Judah, pp.169-72. LeBor, pp.139-44. Tanner, p.225-33. Gagnon, pp.80, 143-4. CIA, pp.25-33.

'Chetniks' and would not join the new Yugoslav communist party, the SK-PJ (League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia), which the JNA leadership backed. The JNA corps in neighbouring Bosnia, however, then responded favourably, and they allegedly formed the best equipped unit in the whole region. The largest armed formation in Banija, the Dvor-based 7th Banija Division, named after a Partisan division in the Second World War, was also apparently established in the same way, that July.⁹⁷

A number of sources report that retired general Dušan Pekić, a Croatian Serb 'National Hero' from the Second World War, activist of the Belgrade-based 'Association of Serbs from Croatia' and former president of the Veterans Association of Yugoslavia, was involved in the distribution of arms to Serbs in Croatia.⁹⁸ Pekić had been part of the SK-PJ, and others in that party, retired Croatian Serb generals, also seem to have been involved – some sources suggest that they were the main distributor of arms in Eastern Slavonia, claiming to have distributed 12-13,000 pieces there.⁹⁹ These high-ranking former generals were extremely well connected and used those connections to get arms from various sources. They were certainly not hindered by the JNA, and by summer at least seem to have had the approval of its leadership.¹⁰⁰ Serbian officials also co-operated with them, and the arms Pekić sent to Eastern Slavonia may have come from Serbian TO stocks via Serbia's Ministry of Defence.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ The unit's name was chosen precisely in order to acquire arms from the communists who had access to them (either the JNA or SK-PJ), again indicating that they, rather than the Serbian government or police, were the key source of arms. Dušan Glavaš, pp.42-54. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Vol.1', 20/12/2010, p.138. Also see: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1100 (Wartime experience of 13th Infantry Brigade of SVK in Slunj, 3/8/1994).

⁹⁸ Among others: ICTY-Šešelj: T4330-8, 15713-5. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Borivoje Savic, T1900-1. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D394 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 25/7/1991). Filip Švarn, 'Who is Veljko Džakula', *Vreme News Digest Agency*, 14/2/1994.

⁹⁹ ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a ('The Serbian Army', book by Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.105-6. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Borivoje Savic, T1900. See also: 'SPO Demands 'Legal' Serbian Army', *Tanjug*, 13/7/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-135, 15/7/1991.

¹⁰⁰ Mamula, pp.236-8. Kolšek cited in Boljkovac, p.340.

¹⁰¹ ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 146D ('What to do with the Serbs of Gorski Kotar', 17/4/1994), pp.293-4. ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a ('The Serbian Army', book by Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.140, 105.

However, Pekić does seem to have been operating autonomously, and was not simply an agent of Serbia (or the JNA, of which he was very critical).¹⁰² Serbia's officials did not want to arm people on party lines (the SK-PJ), and on the contrary saw that as a problem. There was even uncontrolled – and for Serbian officials, problematic - distribution of weapons in parts of Serbia itself, which was linked to Pekić.¹⁰³ Although Milošević clearly approved arming the Serbs in Croatia from spring 1991, and organised efforts to this effect were made by both the Serbian police and the JNA, this process was nevertheless often rather chaotic and uncontrolled, driven by requests from locals and people such as Pekić, with often unintended consequences.

This is illustrated by a Serbian DB report from Frenki, sent from Knin in late July 1991.¹⁰⁴ Frenki reported how Babić had arranged, via the local JNA, for Serbia's Minister of Defence Miodrag Jokić to send a small shipment of arms to Knin. Frenki warned that Babić intended to use these to arm his own loyal party militia, which would lead to disunity in Krajina's defence, and urged that Jokić be so informed. This indicates the lack of co-ordination/central direction in Belgrade, with one part of the Serbian government helping to arm units to which another part of the Serbian government was implacably opposed.

An August 1991 report by the Serbian DB summarising its information on Dušan Pekić, meanwhile, reveals in part how such conflicts could arise.¹⁰⁵ Almost all of the information in the report is derived from DB monitoring of Šešelj and other opposition radicals, and their interactions with Pekić that the DB had incidentally recorded. Pekić was not himself subject to monitoring or surveillance, most likely because of how

¹⁰² '300 Croat Serbs Hold Support Rally in Belgrade', *Tanjug*, 5/11/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-214, 5/11/1991. Nobile & Letica, p.111.

¹⁰³ ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a ('The Serbian Army', book by Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.104-6, 176-8. Domovina Intercepts: B6957 (Milošević-Karadžić, 9/7/1991); B6742 (Karadžić-Milošević, 23/9/1991).

¹⁰⁴ ICTY-Martić: E-499 (Report by Frenki, 28/7/1991).

¹⁰⁵ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1336 (Official Note, Information on Dušan Pekić, DB Serbia, 9/8/1991).

influential and prominent he was. It is not, therefore, surprising that officials in Belgrade did not have a full picture of what was happening.¹⁰⁶

Western Slavonia: A 'Smoking Gun' Study

On a secretive matter such as arms shipments, it is difficult to gain concrete and reliable information. For the region of Western Slavonia, however, there are a number of 'smoking gun' sources – including three reports from the Serbian DB itself in mid-1991, two of them by Branko Pavić, a local rebel organiser who had apparently joined the DB.¹⁰⁷ Stanišić appears to have viewed Western Slavonia as a pivotal region in the conflict,¹⁰⁸ and examining the situation there is a useful indicator of how things were happening.

In a report dated 15 May 1991 Pavić describes how in late 1990 the SDS had initiated the formation of village units, armed with hunting and short arms, in co-operation with local police. Immediately after the Pakrac events in March 1991 they proceeded with the creation of mass armed formations, and by 15 May 1991 had organised about 1,500 men. However, of the men in Pakrac (half of the total) only 20% had (old) military weapons, and many were unarmed, lacking even hunting rifles, while those in neighbouring regions had only 18 military weapons and 200 hunting rifles between them. Pavić therefore requested from Belgrade the 'essential' supply of about 1,100 automatic rifles with ammunition, as well as communications equipment.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ See also: ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a ('The Serbian Army', book by Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.129, 177. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D273 (DB Serbia report, 18/7/1991); E-D1336 (Official Note, Information on Dušan Pekić, DB Serbia, 9/8/1991); E-D67 (Information about Paramilitary Formations, DB Serbia, 1/8/1991). Cvijetin Milivojević, 'Ready for War', *Borba*, 28/8/1991, p.10, in FBIS-EER-91-137, 13/9/1991. 'Territorial Defense Denies Forming Armed Units', *Tanjug*, 1/8/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-149, 2/8/1991.

¹⁰⁷ Officially, Pavić joined in autumn 1991. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D2685 (Decisions Re: Branko Pavić, MUP Serbia, 9/1991).

¹⁰⁸ Domovina Intercepts: B6960 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 9/9/1991); C2536 (Karadžić-Milošević, 19/9/1991); B6946 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 14/12/1991). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2452 (Correspondence from Jovica Stanišić to Minister of Defence of Serbia, MUP Serbia, 9/12/1991).

¹⁰⁹ Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.106-9.

Five weeks later, on 21 June 1991, Pavić submitted another report. In Pakrac they had the same number of men, but apart from some anti-tank weapons not mentioned previously, the situation was identical: only about 20% had military arms, and they had no communications equipment.¹¹⁰ Thus, five weeks on, Pavić's request had apparently not been met, and none of the 'essential' equipment given, by the Serbian DB or anyone else.

On 25 July 1991, meanwhile, the Serbian DB reported on the organising of armed formations in most of Western Slavonia aside from Pakrac, following an interview with a leading figure from the region. The source reported that there had been a real problem in arming units that had been established, and until recently they 'did not have any weapons other than hunting and illegal weapons obtained through smuggling channels'. On 15 July 1991, however, 1,700 barrels were obtained from local military depots and distributed by the SDS, mostly automatic weapons but also mortars and hand-held rocket launchers. This was arranged by Dušan Pekić personally, and negotiations were underway for more to be distributed. Training of the units was also being conducted in local JNA barracks, and another JNA commander had provided weapons without telling his superior.¹¹¹

Other documents confirm this JNA assistance. The Doljane barracks in Daruvar seems to have been pivotal. According to a contemporary account, already in April 1991 pro-Serb commanders began training and forming JNA units from local Serbs. It was decided to start moving arms to Serbian areas, where these battalions were being formed, and the first truck left on 3 June 1991. 4-5,000 barrels were removed in this way, and gradually distributed to the Serbs. This was done on local initiative, contrary to explicit instructions from superiors, including the military district command, although Smiljanić's team may have been involved.¹¹² A number of other sources

¹¹⁰ Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, p.114.

¹¹¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D394 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 25/7/1991).

¹¹² Aleksandar S. Jovanović, *Poraz – koreni poraza* (Belgrade: LDII, 2001), pp.145-54, 176.

confirm this distribution,¹¹³ and Croatian police sources recorded the first large quantity of arms from the Doljane depot to Pakrac in late June 1991.¹¹⁴

These sources thus strongly indicate that there was no significant assistance from the Serbian MUP/DB to Western Slavonia, at least before late July 1991 – despite Stanišić reportedly viewing it as a key region in the conflict. In mid-June 1991 in Pakrac, the centre of rebellion, they still only had a few hundred military weapons, and the weapons that began to arrive subsequently were from local JNA warehouses - not Serbia - thanks to the OB, sympathetic local commanders and Pekić. The situation undoubtedly varied by region, with arming in the Knin Krajina, for example, beginning earlier than elsewhere. But this example gives an indication of the relative importance of different sources of arms, which conflicts strongly with the notion of an early, mass, organised arming operation by the Serbian police.

¹¹³ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 5*, Documents 227-9 (Recommendations for promotion of Dušan Saratlić, Stevo Prodanović, Marko Vujić, 1992), pp.424-8. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Vol.1', 20/12/2010, p.138. Also: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1152 (Report by Security Organ for Western Slavonia, 22/11/1991). 'Grubišno Polje Case', Witness Rade Čakmak (Belgrade: 30/3/2009), accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.hlc-rdc.org/Transkripti/grubisno_polje.html.

¹¹⁴ Miškulin, 'Srpska pobuna...', p.388. Also: ICTY-Milošević: Witness Đuro Matovina, T11008-11. Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009).

5.5. Moderates, Extremists and Militarisation

A final issue worth considering is: what was the attitude of Serbs in Croatia to the acquisition of arms? To what extent was this arming initiated by locals, or by Belgrade and extremist minorities, as suggested by, for example, Gagnon?

The pacifist inclinations of Rašković have been noted in the literature. However, Rašković also understood and endorsed what he saw as the desire of Krajina Serbs for defence against Croatian aggression. In the run-up to the August 1990 referendum he suggested they would call on the JNA to protect them in the event of Croatian police intervention,¹¹⁵ and after the events of 17 August publicly sought intervention by federal organs, for protection from this 'militaristic attack on the Serb people in Croatia'.¹¹⁶ In January 1991 Rašković himself took credit for the fact that 'today there cannot be a conflict in our Krajina between the Croatian police and Serbian nation [which would not] turn into a conflict of the Croatian police and the [JNA]', noting that 'here also Mr Milošević personally helped us, and also we with our efforts won that'.¹¹⁷ Thus, Milošević's promises of JNA protection followed requests from the SDS, including from Rašković himself.¹¹⁸

Rašković does not seem to have advocated arming in autumn and winter 1990 and sought to avoid conflict, even saying in November that 'I am claiming now that barricades are not the way to defend the Serbian people. I do not support those who are arming the people'.¹¹⁹ However, he was involved in appointing the staff to manage the barricades on 18 August, and surely knew that close allies of his, such as SDS VP

¹¹⁵ Dušan Pilić, 'La Croazia teme la guerra civile si riaccende il conflitto con i Serbi', *La Repubblica*, 15/8/1990.

¹¹⁶ 'Rašković To Ask for Federal 'Intervention'', Ljubljana Domestic Service, 18/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-161, 20/8/1990. 'Najveća želja - sprečiti krvoprilice', *Borba*, 20/8/1990, p.3.

¹¹⁷ Snježana Stamatović, 'Autonomija nije pala s neba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.5. Similarly: S. Stamatović & Z. Tarle, 'Biće tu još neprijatnosti', *Borba*, 2-3/3/1991, p.15.

¹¹⁸ See also: Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.231. ICTY-Hadžić: T9444.

¹¹⁹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.132. On the other hand, see: Jovan Rašković, 'What DANAS Does Not Dare To Publish', *NIN*, 28/12/1990, pp.28-29, in FBIS-EER-91-018, 11/2/1991.

Bogoljub Popović and his own driver/escort in Krajina, Dragan Batas, were advocating and involved in the arming of the people.¹²⁰ Rašković spoke sometimes of an unarmed, Gandhi-style march on Zagreb and other pacifist ideas,¹²¹ but it seems he did not try to impose these on the SDS, where the idea of the need for defence dominated. In fact, he even seemed to adopt a more radical stance than Babić in relation to the January 1991 disarmament plan, calling on Serbs not to obey the SFRY Presidency's order on the grounds that, unlike the Croats, the Serbs were not really armed, possessing only hunting weapons which they had paid for themselves.¹²² Moreover, in February he noted that given Croatian arming, 'I think that conditions are reached that we think about... [the fact] that also Serbs in Croatia have to arm themselves. Because of that we will most likely propose that those parts of population, and here I think predominantly about Serbs in Croatia, have to be and become in a legal way the reserve composition of the [JNA]. In that way a certain balance would be established'.¹²³ He subsequently told Knin crowds who sought arms that 'You do not have arms, and I told you not to hand them in'. He claimed that 'I will not take you to a war but to peace', but if the Croats 'attack, we shall defend ourselves', calling on the JNA 'to arm the Serbian people as its reserve force, because we are all JNA members, its best and largest flank'.¹²⁴

Many of Rašković's more moderate allies in the SDS were also involved in, or supported the acquisition of, arms. For example, the president of Obrovac, Sergej Veselinović, who was close to Rašković and even involved in preparations for the Serbian Democratic Forum (SDF) in mid-1991,¹²⁵ had been involved in the procurement and distribution of arms from practically the start, and was close with Dubajić.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Bogoljub Popović, 'Srpski gandi', in *Zbornik o Jovanu Raškoviću* (Novi Sad & Belgrade: 2002), pp.215-7. Predrag Popović, 'Trebalo je da slušamo Tuđmana [Interview with Simo Dubajić]', *Intervju*, 13/3/1995, pp.52-3. ICTY-Martić: E-872 (Statement of Ognjen Biserko, 2/12/1990). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12920-1. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 55 (Official Note about connections between Arkan and Milan Babić, 31/5/1991), pp.138-9.

¹²¹ For example: Miloš Rajković, 'Rašković Threatens 'Great March'', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 22/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-164, 23/8/1990. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.224. Bogoljub Popović,

¹²² Petrović, p.14. S. Stamatović, 'Zbunjenost u Kninu', *Borba*, 21/1/1991, p.5.

¹²³ Milorad Vučelić, 'Osjetiti Bartolomejsku noć', *NIN*, 15/2/1991, p.23.

¹²⁴ 'Serbian Leaders Emphasize Serb Unity', *Tanjug*, 19/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-035, 21/2/1991.

¹²⁵ Zoran Daskalović, 'Three Serbian Mistakes', *Danas*, 23/7/1991, in FBIS-EER-91-118, 7/8/1991. ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula, T399, 423.

¹²⁶ Interviews: Lazar Macura; Ratko Ličina; Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). ICJ: *Croatia v.*

Vukčević, meanwhile, sent a telegram to the JNA leadership immediately after 17 August, 'asking that the parts of the Serbian people who were considered as the reserve force of the JNA – because all of us were reservists of the JNA – should have uniforms and weapons distributed to them because we shouldn't worry ourselves how to get hold of weapons. And thus... they would be able to defend themselves, if necessary.'¹²⁷ In April 1991 Slavonian SDS leaders noted that Serbs were 'increasingly relying on themselves for self-defence', 'disappointed' with the JNA's 'tardy and inadequate response' to Croatian actions, and the following month Džakula was involved in seeking Serb opposition volunteers from Serbia.¹²⁸ By summer 1991 even the president of Vrginmost municipality, an anti-SDS communist and founder of the SDF, was also seeking arms for defence.¹²⁹

In the context of Croatian arming and the perception of a threat, including the threat of being taken out of Yugoslavia and into an independent Croatia, many Serbs in the Krajina and Slavonia sought JNA protection and felt the need for arming and organising in self-defence. Thus, Belgrade was not arming extremist minorities to provoke conflict, as suggested by authors such as Gagnon; it sent arms primarily in response to demands from mainstream Croatian Serb representatives, and long after those demands began.

It is certainly true that arms often ended up in the hands of extremists, as it was precisely they who were the first to sign up for war. Many of the people who proclaimed themselves 'first fighters' (*prvoborci*), and their units, later descended into crime, looting and paramilitarism. This was a feature of all sides of the wars in the former Yugoslavia: Boljkovac, the most moderate HDZ official, was expanding the Croatian police with precisely such people, and the former communist Špegelj was giving them arms, while the most prominent Bosnian defenders of Sarajevo in 1992-93 were notorious

Yugoslavia: 'Memorial of the Republic of Croatia: Annexes – General Annexes – Volume 4', 1/3/2001, Annex 55 (JNA report, 10/12/1990), pp.141-2. Dubajić, 'Otvoreno pismo Slobodanu Miloševiću', 17/3/1991, in Radaković.

¹²⁷ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Vojislav Vukčević, T11076.

¹²⁸ ICTY-Hadžić: T9443-4. ICTY-Martić: E-235a (SDS Slavonia meeting, 8/5/1991).

¹²⁹ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, p.175.

criminals.¹³⁰ However, the demand for arms came from mainstream local leaderships, including many who were more moderately inclined. That those arms often ended up with extremists was a feature of the Yugoslav conflicts in general.

¹³⁰ Donia, pp.162-3. Hoare, pp.98-9.

5.6. Conclusions

From autumn 1990 onwards many Serbs in Croatia, including their local leaderships, sought arms. Serbia, however, offered only fairly limited assistance at first, most likely as it was counting on an alliance with the JNA, and did not want to unnecessarily alienate it by creating Serb paramilitary units. At most a few thousand hunting weapons were sold to the Krajina Serbs, and any assistance from the Serbian MUP/DB in this period fell far short of Krajina desires. Croatian arming and military organising far outstripped that by the Krajina Serbs at this stage. These facts encourage a re-assessment of this aspect of the idea of Belgrade-backed 'Serbian aggression' and Croatian 'defence', at least for this time period, and support the idea that a 'security dilemma' was in play.

By March 1991, given the arming of the Croatian side, the failure of the JNA to disarm Croat formations and the evident approach of conflict, there appears to have been a shift in policy in favour of arming the Serbs in Croatia. More significant arms and assistance were then provided by Serbia. But Serbia's direct assistance was soon far outstripped by the JNA, which began arming the Serbs in Croatia (and Bosnia) as its reserve flank for the coming conflict. Serbia obviously supported that move by the JNA and had been advocating it, but was not the direct source of those arms. In fact, many of the arms that did come from Serbian stocks were actually distributed by intermediaries, such as Dušan Pekić, rather than directly by the Serbian police. Indeed, local requests, from Croatian Serb 'moderates' as well as radicals, seem to have determined the distribution of arms as much as decisions in Belgrade, in a rather chaotic and uncontrolled process - a far cry from the image of an organised and directed scheme of mass arming by Milošević's subordinates.

As we shall see in Chapter 7, Serbia's own direct influence on Krajina Serb forces was, in fact, rather limited. Before considering this, however, I will now look at the role of

Serbia in Krajina Serb politics in 1990-91, focusing on Belgrade's relationship with the SDS and its key leaders, Rašković and Babić.

Chapter 6: Serbia and the Serbian Democratic Party

In 1989 the first Serbian nationalist protests erupted in Knin, and it was out of these first stirrings of Serbian unrest that the SDS emerged. Scholars often associate the Serbian nationalist movement in Croatia with the authorities of the Republic of Serbia, with a pronounced tendency to view the SDS and its leaders as puppets of Belgrade. Milan Babić in particular is generally characterised as a stooge of Milošević, a politician whom Belgrade simply created in place of Rašković. Rašković's independence from, and disagreements with, Milošević, by contrast, are often recognised. The reason for this replacement is usually located in Rašković's moderation, with Babić seen as a suitably hardline successor.

This chapter examines these assertions, looking in detail at the relationship between the key leaders of the SDS and the authorities in Serbia, particularly Milošević himself, and the role, if any, that Serbia played in the SDS's internal factional politics. It covers the period from the first Serbian unrest in Croatia in 1989 to late 1991, focusing on the key leadership contest in this period, between Rašković and Babić, and how this conflict played out in the Krajina region where Babić was based. Although Rašković's independence from Milošević is often acknowledged, I also examine the nuances of their relationship, as this provides essential context for examining the relationship of other Croatian Serb leaders with Milošević. I also look at the reasons behind Babić's rise as a leader. Belgrade's attitude has been given both as the reason why some people supported him, and why some people opposed him, so it is important to explain how he acquired support (and encountered opposition). First, however, I will examine another faction among Serbs in Croatia: the Serbs of the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH).

6.1. 'SDS' and 'SKH' Serbs

As well as growing Serbian nationalist activities outside the ruling SKH, in 1989-90 there was also a split within the party itself, with Serb-dominated SKH organs and representatives becoming increasingly critical of the Zagreb leadership.¹ This split widened after the election of a new SKH leadership headed by Ivica Račan in December 1989, and would become complete after the spring 1990 elections.² In those elections most Serbs, including most Serbs in the Krajina, had voted for SKH representatives, and it was only gradually over the course of 1990 and the first half of 1991 that the SDS achieved complete dominance. SKH Serb representatives in this period occupied an uneasy and uncertain position between Zagreb and Knin, and lacked political organisation and momentum.³

In summer-autumn 1990, however, there was an attempt to create precisely such momentum, as leading SKH Serb Borislav Mikelić formed a multinational, but predominantly Serb, 'Socialist Party of Croatia – Party of Yugoslav Orientation' (*Socijalistička partija Hrvatske - Partija jugoslavenske orijentacije*, SPH-PJO), based primarily in his home region of Banija.⁴ Mikelić opposed both the HDZ and the SDS from a socialist and pro-Yugoslav (but also pro-Serbian) perspective, and argued for the maintenance of Croatia in federal Yugoslavia, with Serbian national equality – but not autonomy - in Croatia.⁵ Despite some initial successes, however, the party failed to gain

¹ This mainly involved local boards and representatives from Serb-inhabited regions. A real range of views could be found among Serbs in the SKH, and the most prominent, long-standing Serbs in the party's leadership, such as Dušan Dragosavac and Stanko Stojčević, were not involved in this split. There were also Serbs such as Dušan Plečaš, executive secretary of the SDP in 1990-91, who were firmly on the 'Croatian' side. Interview Dušan Plečaš (Zagreb: 7/10/2009).

² See, for example: Zoran Krželj, 'The Flexible Pattern of Nationalism', *Borba*, 10/6/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-201, 19/10/1989. Gojko Marinković, 'Raskol hrvatskih komunista', *Danas*, 12/6/1990, pp.9-11. Chapter 'O Kninskoj Krajini i Tromeđi (1989-1991)' in Radaković.

³ See, for example: Zoran Daskalović, 'Zašto su otišili', *Danas*, 12/2/1991, pp.21-2.

⁴ The party's secretary, Goran Babić, was a Croatian, and there was reportedly a 60:40 split between Serbs and Croats in the party's leadership and membership. Interviews: Borislav Mikelić; Nikola Dobrijević, president of the Sisak branch of the SPH-PJO, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 2007).

⁵ Interview Borislav Mikelić (Belgrade: 2007). 'New Croatian Socialist Party Established', *Tanjug*, 25/8/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-167, 28/8/1990. 'Serbs Hold Protest Rally in Baniski Grabovac', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 1/10/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-191, 2/10/1990.

a significant following, partly due to the hospitalisation of Mikelić in October 1990, and by 1991 the party was a non-factor.⁶

A point worth bearing in mind when considering Serbian media support or sympathy for the SDS and its leaders is that, in fact, these SKH Serbs were far closer to Belgrade than activists of the SDS, both ideologically, as communists/former communists, and in personal contacts and connections, since they had been part of the united League of Communists of Yugoslavia. There is evidence that Mikelić was connected with official Belgrade and to some extent co-ordinating with them with regard to the SPH-PJO.⁷ The announcement of the party's formation was front page news for Serbian daily *Politika*, and the party received direct support from Milošević's SPS, whose general secretary attended the founding of its Knin branch in November 1990 – a direct challenge to the SDS.⁸

This is not to suggest that the SPH-PJO was a movement hatched in Belgrade, or that Belgrade had fully thrown its weight behind the party in opposition to the SDS. But the SPH-PJO was certainly much more in line with Belgrade's political preferences than the Serbian nationalist and anti-communist SDS, and this was fairly evident. SNV Vice-President Mile Dakić, president of the small 'Yugoslav Independent Democratic Party' in Croatia, for example, recalls that Milošević, as a communist, never liked the SDS, and when he, Babić and Milošević met in January 1991, Milošević spoke much more with him, as leader of a Yugoslav party, than Babić.⁹

⁶ Mikelić crashed his car, which, he claims, was sabotaged by the HDZ. Interview Borislav Mikelić (Belgrade: 2007).

⁷ Mamula, pp.202-4. Tomac, pp.135, 141. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.12 (Babić Interview), p.56.

⁸ Joško Čelan, 'Dovidenja, Raškoviću?', *Vjesnik*, 10/9/1990, p.12. Marinko Čulić, 'Tko su vode Srba', *Danas*, 6/11/1990, pp.10-11.

⁹ Interview Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 5/11/2007). Similarly, in Bosnia, Milošević showed favouritism towards Dragan Đokanović, leader of a small 'Democratic Federalists' party. Đokanović has recalled that 'I received full support from Milošević and that is one of the reasons I rose in politics in Bosnia', with Milošević asking Karadžić to ensure his presence at two meetings Milošević had in Sarajevo in 1991. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-D38 (Witness Statement of Dragan Đokanović), p.4.

If Milošević really had been able to choose who represented the Croatian Serbs in 1990, there can be little doubt that it would have been such former communists. Indeed, when he did exert such influence, he picked people like this – most notably Mikelić, as RSK Prime Minister in 1994-95.¹⁰ But in 1990-91 Belgrade's evident preferences in this respect clearly had little impact on the ground in the Krajina. People there were not watching Belgrade to decide whom to support. Belgrade's preference for the SKH Serbs also reinforces the point that although, as we shall see, SDS activists did benefit from sympathetic media coverage, this was more a consequence of the Serbian media's nationalist stance towards Croatia than a deliberate and conscious effort to promote the SDS.

¹⁰ Interview Slobodan Jarčević, RSK Foreign Minister, 1992-93 (Belgrade: 2007, 2011).

6.2. The First Serbian Unrest in Croatia and the Formation of the SDS

In the late 1980s the official Serbian media adopted an increasingly nationalist and critical perspective towards Croatia, effectively the 'Memorandum' perspective, and the media was opened up to Serbian nationalists, including those from Croatia. Most of the initial organisers of the Serbian movement in Croatia benefited either from connections with the SANU elite or the sympathy of the Serbian media, which many of them were cited by or wrote articles for.¹¹

Rašković was one such person. He appears to have already been well known in the Knin area at the time, and had been close with Dobrica Ćosić and other leading SANU figures - intellectuals and dissidents - since the 1970s, formally becoming a member of SANU in December 1988.¹² In the 1980s he also began to appear on Serbian political talkshows, becoming known as an analyst and critic across Yugoslavia. This apparently intensified in the late 1980s, and by October 1989 future Tuđman advisor Slaven Letica was already complaining that Rašković was being promoted by the Serbian media.¹³

The first Serbian unrest in Croatia took place in Knin in February 1989, when locals protested against perceived Croatian and Slovenian support for Albanian separatism in Kosovo. Jovan Opačić and Simo Dubajić were among those elected to the protest committee and the main speakers at the rally.¹⁴ The next disturbance came in July 1989,

¹¹ Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007). Kovačević, p.24. 'Knin Society Criticises 'Croatian Bureaucrats'', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 7/9/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-173, 8/9/1989. Marko Lopušina, 'Srbi u Hrvatskoj: Po potkazuje Podravsku Slatinu', *Intervju*, 25/5/1990, pp.11-13.

¹² Četnik, p.228. Tanasije Mladenović, *Usputne skice za portrete* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1995), pp.123-9, 149. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.171.

¹³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.190-1. Kovačević, pp.109-10. Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007). Rašković had appeared on Zagreb TV already in the 1970s: Mladenović, p.123. Others suggest it was in summer 1990 that the Serbian media began to support the SDS: Marinko Čulić, 'Pohod udruženih voždova', *Danas*, 10/7/1990, pp.13-15. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12873.

¹⁴ Interview Marko Dobrijević, Organisational Secretary of SDS, 1990-1 (Belgrade: 5/8/2007). Kovačević, p.24

following a controversial decision by the Croatian Assembly to maintain the official term 'the Croatian literary language', which most Serbs had opposed,¹⁵ and an even more controversial proposal, supported by a quarter of deputies, to remove the Serbs from the constitutional definition of Croatia. Serbs in Croatia almost universally defended the existing definition, viewing it as the foundation of Serbian equality in Croatia, and many were outraged that the Sabor had even discussed such a proposal, with Mikelić resigning from the assembly in protest. The Croatian leadership was also criticised for its weak defence of the existing definition, undoubtedly a reflection of the fact that, as then SKH secretary Drago Dimitrović recalls, leading Croats in the SKH did in fact think it should be revised, although they had agreed not to pursue the issue as their Serb colleagues were opposed.¹⁶

Meanwhile, an official commemoration of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo had been scheduled in Knin for 8-9 July. With 30,000 people attending the proceedings on 9 July, including Serbs from elsewhere in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia, events partly developed into a protest against Zagreb, with nationalist slogans and posters of Milošević.¹⁷ The day before a Serbian cultural society 'Zora' (Dawn) had also been founded – really a proto-party of local Serb nationalists - with Opačić as its president. With the support of a radical contingent from Nova Pazova, Serbia, Opačić then interrupted the official proceedings of the commemoration to give a speech of his own, and he and subsequently twenty other local Serbs were arrested and sentenced to several months' imprisonment. This catapulted him into the limelight, confirming his popularity in the Knin region.¹⁸

¹⁵ Technically, a decision on changes was postponed. The full definition was 'the Croatian literary language, the standard form of the national language of Croats and Serbs in Croatia, which is called either Croatian or Serbian', though the term 'Croatian literary language' was commonly used. 'Languages as Stumbling Block', *Politika*, 23/6/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-125, 30/6/1989. Milan Rakas, 'Oil on the Fire', *Borba*, 23/6/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-123, 28/6/1989. Keith Langston & Anita Peti-Stantić, *Language Planning and National Identity in Croatia* (Basingstoke-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp.110-1. For the language debates see: Meri Štajduhar, 'Lingvisti i političari', *Danas*, 27/6/1989, pp.12-3. Dragović-Soso, pp.232-3.

¹⁶ Interview Drago Dimitrović (Zagreb: 9/10/2009). Marinko Čulić, 'Amandmani bez pogače', *Danas*, 27/6/1989, pp.11-13. 'Dragosavac Views Milošević's Statements', *Vjesnik*, 13/8/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-162, 23/8/1989. Perić, p.255.

¹⁷ Interview Borislav Mikelić (Belgrade: 2007). Sell, pp.115-6.

¹⁸ Interviews: Veljko Popović; Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007).

Serbia's intelligentsia, arguing that Opačić was arrested simply for being a Serb and speaking out for Serb rights, led a united campaign for his release.¹⁹ These nationalist activities in both Croatia and Belgrade enjoyed the open sympathies of the Serbian authorities. Jović wrote in his diary at the time that Serbs in Croatia were asking for 'equality', while in September Vojvodina requested that the federal party, rather than local authorities, investigate the issue – causing an angry Croatian reaction that their sovereignty was being attacked by their being reduced to 'local authorities'.²⁰ Serbian party official Ratomir Vico pointed to the controversial constitutional proposals and considered it 'quite natural that many parts of the public are disturbed by the content of the Knin judgements'.²¹ At the end of the year several Serbian officials, such as the hardliner Kertes, even suggested an autonomous province could be founded for Serbs in Croatia.²²

Various people from Belgrade - intellectuals and journalists who were originally from Knin - had also played an important role in these events. Mikelić explains that academics in Belgrade originally from the Knin region, in alliance with local Serb nationalists, pressured the local municipal leadership into proposing a Kosovo commemoration. The local leadership agreed to this fearing that otherwise they would be replaced, such was the atmosphere in Knin already.²³ These Belgraders also played a prominent role in the creation of 'Zora', which they in fact seem to have instigated.²⁴

It is also possible that Milošević knew something would occur that July, as he personally instructed Serbia's delegation to the celebration to leave after the first day,

¹⁹ See: Dragović-Soso, pp.235-7.

²⁰ 'Vojvodina LC on Repressions at Celebrations', *Zagreb Domestic Service*, 8/9/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-177, 14/9/1989. 'Dimitrović on 'Provocations' Against Croatia', *Zagreb Domestic Service*, 14/9/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-181, 20/9/1989. 'LCY Central Committee Proceedings Reported', *Tanjug*, 11/9/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-178, 11/9/1989.

²¹ Slavko Čuruvija, 'Divisions without Quarrels, Quarrels Because of Unification', *Borba*, 16-17/9/1989, p.5, in FBIS-EEU-89-188, 29/9/1989.

²² Marinko Čulić, 'Nešto između', *Danas*, 12/12/1989, pp.22-3. 'Pokrajine', *Danas*, 19/12/1989, pp.30-31. Krmpotić, p.12.

²³ Interview Borislav Mikelić (Belgrade: 2007).

²⁴ Miloš Jevtić, *Ostaje priča: razgovori sa Jovanom Radulovićem* (Valjevo: Kej, 1999), pp.90-1. Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007).

meaning they did not participate in the main event which Opačić and the radicals visiting from Serbia interrupted.²⁵ On the other hand, the Serbian authorities were publicly disassociating themselves from those radicals, before as well as after the Knin events, and Croatian SFRJ Presidency member Stipe Šuvar's pointed non-attendance of Serbia's own Kosovo celebrations a week earlier could also explain this.²⁶

It was out of the Serbian nationalist circles in Knin and Dalmatia involved in these events in 1989 that the SDS would emerge. Already in late 1989 the draft programme had been written and an initiative board, consisting of the leaders of 'Zora' and some others, was created. The formation of a party was not publicly announced, however, until 27 January 1990 (an announcement broadcast on Belgrade TV). The SDS was formally constituted at its founding session in Knin on 17 February, with Rašković as its president.²⁷

Already in 1989 Rašković was popular in Knin and seen by both the Croatian state and local Serbian nationalists as a leader of Serbian nationalists in Dalmatia. The Serbian Orthodox Church proposed him as a speaker at the Kosovo celebration in Knin in July 1989, and Opačić's protest was actually initially over the fact that official organs had not allowed Rašković to speak. (*Politika* then published his undelivered speech.)²⁸ Rašković was also a member of the main board of 'Zora', although he had not attended its founding in July. He was thus a fairly natural choice for president of the SDS.

²⁵ Jovan Kablar, 'Političko previranje u predvečerje građanskog rata u Hrvatskoj', in Miloško Budimir (ed), *Građanski Rat u Hrvatskoj, 1991-95, Zbornik Radova 6* (Belgrade: Udruženje Srba iz Hrvatske, 2010), p.155.

²⁶ Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.22-4, 37-8, 79. RFE, Svjedoci Raspada: Stipe Šuvar. Marinko Čulić, 'Kokarde opet sjaje', *Danas*, 18/7/1989, pp.7-10. 'Partija i solidarnost', *Danas*, 18/7/1989, p.32. Gojko Marinković, 'Napad je najbolja odbrane', *Danas*, 25/7/1989, pp.12-13. 'Solidarity' Defends Work in Public Statement', *Tanjug*, 18/6/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-118, 21/6/1989. D. Vučinić et al, 'Discussion of Interethnic Relations', *Borba*, 31/7/1989, in FBIS-EEU-89-151, 8/8/1989. The 'Sava Society' of the Novi Pazar radicals was the nucleus of several leading Serbian opposition parties, and was banned when its transformation into a party was announced in January 1990: 'Work of Sava Society Banned', *Tanjug*, 13/1/1990, FBIS-EEU-90-011, 17/1/1990.

²⁷ ICTY-Martić: Witness Branko Popović. Branko Popović, 'Osnivanje Srpske Demokratske Stranke', in Čosić et al, pp.185-197. Jevtić, p.91.

²⁸ Branko Popović, pp.185-197. Kovačević, pp.109-10. Kablar, p.153. Đorđe Ličina, 'Indictment in Petty Politicians' Encirclement', *Vjesnik*, 3/11/1989, p.4., in FBIS-EER-89-116, 24/10/1989.

Rašković's links with Belgrade intellectuals did, however, certainly help secure his leadership of these Serb nationalists, with Ćosić, for example, advising Opačić in late 1989 to connect with Rašković, and also helping draft the SDS's programme.²⁹

The official Serbian authorities, however, do not appear to have been involved in 'Zora' or the SDS. In fact, the people in Belgrade that Rašković was most connected with were involved with the founding of the opposition Democratic Party in Serbia, and Rašković initially wanted the SDS to be merely the Croatian branch of that party, which other locals rejected.³⁰

We can thus see that Serbian nationalist activities in Croatia developed with the support or sympathy of official Serbia, mainly through the media. However, although Serbian nationalists in Croatia benefited from media access and support, their direct connections were with Belgrade's nationalist intellectuals – many of whom were later on the side of the Serbian opposition rather than the regime - rather than official leaders or institutions. In addition, Rašković and Opačić both arose to prominence locally. Although they benefited from their connections with and support from Belgrade intellectuals and the Serbian media, it would be an exaggeration to conclude that they were 'created' by either official or unofficial Belgrade.

²⁹ Četnik, p.228. Branko Popović, pp.191-3. Dragović-Soso. p.237. Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, p.451.

³⁰ Branko Popović, p.191. Interviews with SDS officials Branko Marjanović, Marko Dobrijević and Petar Štikovac (Belgrade: 2007). Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.224. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.168. Radulovic, *Sudbina krajine*, p.16. Jevtić, pp.91-2.

6.3. Rašković and Belgrade

I will now consider the relationship between Rašković and official Belgrade; the extent to which Milošević ever had any influence or control over him; the reasons why Milošević came to oppose Rašković; and whether Belgrade had any role in the first attempt, in August 1990, to depose him as president of the SDS.

Rašković and Milošević

Rašković had been part of dissident Serbian nationalist, anti-communist circles since the 1970s. He was much closer to the Serbian opposition than to the regime, originally wanting the SDS to be a branch of Belgrade's Democratic Party. Above all, he was close to Ćosić, whom he considered his 'spiritual father'. Ćosić helped promote him as leader of the SDS and was involved in the formation of the party, as well as the drafting of its programme.³¹ Ćosić later began meeting with Milošević, and in 1992-93 even served as President of the reduced Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). However, it was only in March 1990 that Ćosić and Milošević first came into contact, so it is very unlikely that they were working together to promote Rašković.³²

Rašković's own stance on Milošević and his regime was somewhat mixed. He recognised what he saw as Milošević's contribution to unifying the Serbian nation in Serbia, but also regarded him as a communist relic and rather undemocratic figure. He made this stance publicly clear on numerous occasions, and in discussions with Milošević himself. He also supported the SDS running in Serbia's elections, to contribute to the creation of a mixed parliament and thus democratisation.³³ At the same

³¹ Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.171. Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, p.451. Četnik, pp.228-9.

³² Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.161. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.121.

³³ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.159, 207, 211, 25, 236-8, 286-8, 313. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.204. Evica Kostovska, 'Stranke složene – u osudama', *Borba*, 21/5/1991, p.3. B. Lazukić, 'Srpska vlada mora da se izvini srpskom narodu', *Borba*, 18/6/1990, p.3. Snježana Stamatović, 'Srbi po rodu – Hrvatska po domu', *Borba*, 18/6/1990, p.7. Jovan Rašković, 'Draškovićeve manipulacije', *NIN*, 6/12/1990, p.13. Snježana Stamatović, 'Autonomija nije pala s neba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.5. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), pp.44-47. Srđan Radulović, 'Naprslu štit srpstva', *NIN*, 3/5/1991.

time, however, Rašković did want Milošević to support the stances of the Serbs in Croatia, both internationally and in talks with Zagreb, as well as to help protect them through the JNA.³⁴ This held true for most in the SDS, although somewhat less so for Rašković, as he was less wedded to the JNA/armed solution than others, and placed stock in negotiations as a solution. Rašković also seems to have regarded himself as a principled individual, more of an ideologue and intellectual than a politician, and was less prone to act tactically (by, for example, covering up his criticism of Milošević to secure his support).

Nevertheless, Rašković did temper his criticism at times, and try to assuage Milošević. For example, after the content of Rašković's talks with Croatian officials in August 1990 was leaked, with him quoted as calling Milošević a 'Bolshevik' and a 'tyrant', Rašković wrote an open-letter to Milošević praising his achievements for the Serbian nation. Around the same time he also apparently agreed with Milošević to limit the SDS's activities in Serbia, although he soon reneged on this.³⁵

It appears that Ćosić introduced Rašković to Milošević. They first met in about June 1990 and then a number of times thereafter, including in large group meetings with other Serbian nationalist intellectuals and politicians, such as Ćosić and Karadžić. Reliable sources refer to at least five meetings of Rašković with Milošević in 1990.³⁶ In 1991 they had contact through an intermediary at least once, in April.³⁷ However, the available evidence suggests that Rašković was not under Milošević's influence or control, and that they never had a particularly good relationship. Ćosić, indeed, later recalled that Milošević 'did not like' Rašković because of his 'anti-communist' stance, and only agreed to meet him in the first place on Ćosić's 'persistent insistence'.³⁸

Petar Damjanić, 'Podjelena Srbija', *Vreme*, 22/4/1991, p.29. Interviews Branko Marijanović; Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 11/2007).

³⁴ For example: Snježana Stamatović, 'Autonomija nije pala s neba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.5.

³⁵ Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.338-9. Petrović, p.24.

³⁶ Interview Branko Marijanović (Belgrade: 11/2007). Petrović, pp.23-4. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.170. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.158. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.10 (Babić Interview), pp.44-51.

³⁷ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.203, 230-1.

³⁸ Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, p.139.

National questions were not the only topics of discussion between Rašković and Milošević. They also discussed political developments in Serbia and had intellectual and theoretical discussions about political systems and other issues. Rašković openly disagreed with Milošević on these topics.³⁹ Regarding SDS activities in Serbia, Rašković apparently agreed with Milošević in September 1990 to limit SDS electoral participation to fielding some candidates in Vojvodina, where they would take votes from the opposition rather than the SPS.⁴⁰ Later, however, despite the clear opposition of Belgrade (and the Serbian opposition), he supported the full participation of the SDS in Serbia's elections and made considerable effort at the SDS main board meeting of 22 November 1990 to persuade the party to support this, almost succeeding. He then supported the SDS Serbia faction's break-away and participation regardless (though also endorsing Milošević's candidacy for President of Serbia).⁴¹ This indicates Milošević's very limited influence on him, particularly as the participation of the SDS in Serbia's elections was a relatively minor issue compared with the future of Croatia's Serbs.

It therefore seems very unlikely that Milošević had any role in forming the SDS's programme in 1990. The core programme of the right to self-determination (and linking that to Croatia's relationship with Yugoslavia), regional autonomy via the Association and potentially territorial autonomy was all developed and publicly spoken of before Rašković and Milošević met. The SNV was initiated by Babić and Opačić, neither of whom seem to have been in contact with Belgrade at the time, while Rašković himself defended both the Association and the SNV and denied that Belgrade had anything to do with them.⁴² Slavonian SDS leader Vukčević has claimed that Belgrade advocated waiting until Croatia declared its constitution before declaring SAOK, and that it was

³⁹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.171-2, 204. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.313. R. Matijas, 'Učesnik radio drame', *Borba*, 2/8/1990, p.9. Interview Branko Marijanović (Belgrade: 7/11/2007). R. Matijas, 'Učesnik radio drame', *Borba*, 2/8/1990. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), pp.44-47.

⁴⁰ Petrović, p.24. And see: footnote 108.

⁴¹ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.3 (Babić Interview), pp.16-17. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.171-2. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.211. Interview Branko Marijanović (Belgrade: 7/11/2007). Snježana Stamatović, 'Ne priznajemo diktat Zagreba', *Borba*, 7/1/1991, p.5. Snježana Stamatović, 'Autonomija nije pala s neba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.5. Jovan Rašković, 'Draškovićeve manipulacije', *NIN*, 6/12/1990, p.13.

⁴² Milić of Mačve, p.175.

for this reason that Rašković and Babić both rejected a proposal he made to form SAOK in November 1990, only to then declare it a month later.⁴³ It seems unlikely that Rašković was following any guidance from Belgrade, however, and, as discussed later, the same applies to Babić.

Rašković described discussions with Milošević on two issues connected with Croatia: Rašković's idea for a Gandhi-style unarmed Serb march on Zagreb, and for a united Krajina state should Yugoslavia disintegrate. He mentioned these ideas in meetings of 15-20 eminent figures, including Milošević, all of whom apart from Čosić strongly rejected them (though Čosić himself has since dismissed them as 'naïve' and 'silly').⁴⁴ The proposal for a Gandhi march was never implemented, but that most in the SDS in Krajina favoured armed 'resistance' easily accounts for this, and Rašković did not abandon his pacifist ideas, continuing to advocate them at key moments. The united Krajina state concept, meanwhile, continued to be regularly advocated by Rašković regardless of Milošević's opposition.

The available evidence thus suggests that, despite receiving some media support and meeting with Milošević a number of times in 1990, Rašković was, as most of the existing literature suggests, an independent figure and not co-ordinating with Milošević or following his instructions, nor even particularly influenced by him.

Belgrade Turns Against Rašković

On 31 July 1990 *Danas* published the controversial transcript of Rašković's recent talks with Tuđman. Three weeks later, meanwhile, details of Rašković's meeting with Croatian Interior Minister Boljkovac were published in the Croatian media, again showing him as seeking compromise and disassociating himself from the 'great

⁴³ Marijana Milosavljević, 'Prof Vojislav Vukčević, Advokat: Šepanje do sledećeg rata', *NIN*, 20/3/1992, p.26.

⁴⁴ Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.170. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.158. Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, pp.139-40.

Bolshevik' and 'tyrant' Milošević.⁴⁵ The Serbian state media appears to have been very critical of Rašković over these revelations, and around this time began actively opposing him.⁴⁶ Although *Politika* published Rašković's open letter supporting Milošević in September, for example, its editorial criticised him for chatting with Boljkovac while the defenders were on the barricades, making clear where Belgrade's sentiments lay.⁴⁷ Publication in *NIN* of an interview with Rašković explaining the two incidents was allegedly delayed by two months, and other editorial comments highlighted Belgrade's preference for Babić over Rašković.⁴⁸ Rašković did still have plenty of access to the Belgrade media, and there does not appear to have been a major, open campaign against him as there was against Babić in spring 1992, over the Vance peace plan.⁴⁹ But it was certainly clear that Rašković was out of favour. Milošević seems to have stopped meeting with him in 1991, and a leading figure of the Serbian state media reportedly said that Rašković was more dangerous for Serbs in Croatia than Tuđman.⁵⁰

It is usually assumed that Belgrade opposed Rašković because of his relative moderation. Certainly, his pacifist and anti-war approach contrasted with Milošević's, and there may have been doubt in Belgrade as to Rašković's commitment to the Serbian cause.⁵¹ Informed sources also mention other major reasons for their conflict, however.

⁴⁵ See: Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, pp.305-338.

⁴⁶ ICTY-Martić: Witness Branko Popović, general secretary of the SDS (1990-92), T8090. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12894.

⁴⁷ This was widely noted in the Croatian media: Milan Jajčinović, 'Suverenitet na kušnji', *Danas*, 11/9/1990, pp.18-19. Joško Čelan, 'Doviđenja, Raškoviću?', *Vjesnik*, 10/9/1990, p.12.

⁴⁸ Dragan Tanasić, 'Dr Jovan Rašković, predsednik Srpske Demokratske Stranke: Nisam političar', *Intervju*, No.243, 28/9/1990, pp.19-23. Tanasić. Toma Džadžić, 'Hedonizam Jovana Raškovića', *NIN*, 22/2/1991, p.19. Also: 'Instead of an Apology, the Fall of a Bastille', *NIN*, 29/3/1991, pp.14-16, in FBIS-EER-91-060, 6/5/1991

⁴⁹ For example: 'Rijec je o zloupotrebi', *Borba*, 1/8/1990, p.5. Jovan Rašković, 'What DANAS Does Not Dare To Publish', *NIN*, 28/12/1990, pp.28-29, in FBIS-EER-91-018, 11/2/1991. Milorad Vučelić, 'Osjetiti Bartolomejsku noć', *NIN*, 15/2/1991, p.23.

⁵⁰ Četnik, p.238. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043. Also: Mamula, p.201. 'Instead of an Apology, the Fall of a Bastille', *NIN*, 29/3/1991, pp.14-16, in FBIS-EER-91-060, 6/5/1991. Activists of the Association of Serbs from Croatia in Belgrade, who had good contacts with the Serbian regime, also reportedly supported Babić against Rašković. ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103466. Jović recalls that the state media would reflect Milošević's views of Serb leaders outside Serbia: ICTY-Milošević- E-P596.1a (Statement of Borisav Jović), p.35.

⁵¹ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), pp.49-50. Mamula, p.201. Četnik, p.328. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.170.

Ćosić, for example, notes that Milošević did not like Rašković's anti-communism, considering him a 'conservative' and 'opportunist' even before they met, while some suggest that Milošević feared Rašković's popularity within Serbia itself.⁵² Rašković's public criticisms of Milošević and support for opposition activities in Serbia were also undoubtedly a factor: Milošević wanted, by contrast, to use Serb leaders outside Serbia to bolster his domestic position, via statements of support and endorsement.⁵³

Sometimes Rašković was actually more radical than Milošević - for example, in his advocacy of a united Krajina state, and his position on the SFRJ Presidency order on disarmament in January 1991. Indeed, in the The Hague Babić explained Milošević's opposition to Rašković with reference to Rašković's attacks on the JNA over its failure to disarm Croats, as well as his public criticisms of Milošević.⁵⁴ Rašković's relative moderation was thus just one of a number of factors explaining why he and Milošević came into conflict.

Schism in the SDS

The leaking of the Tuđman-Rašković transcripts had immediate consequences for Rašković within the SDS. At the next meeting of the SDS leadership, on 7 August 1990, Opačić and Zelenbaba sought Rašković's resignation, arguing that the transcripts showed that he was 'neither Serbian nor democratic'.⁵⁵ They received very little support, however - they had failed to cultivate followers within the party structures, and even those around Babić who were critical of Rašković considered him a better choice for now.⁵⁶

⁵² Hudelist, *Beogradski dnevnik*, p.139. Jovan Kesar, 'Jovan Rašković', *Večernji Novosti*, 5/9/2007, accessed 1/8/2014 from: www.krajinaforce.com. Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p.170. Dragan Tanasić. Interviews: Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007); Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 1/10/2009).

⁵³ 'We Do Not Allow Fratricide of the Serbian People', *Politika*, 11/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-050, 14/3/1991. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13109, T13565.

⁵⁴ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13107-8.

⁵⁵ Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007).

⁵⁶ Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac (Belgrade: 5/8/2007).

Vukčević believes this attempted deposing of Rašković was ordered by Belgrade.⁵⁷ It does seem that it was around then that Belgrade turned against Rašković, and some evidence indicates an external role in this party crisis. Babić claimed that the day before the transcripts were published, Krste Bjelić (a Serb from Croatia who was then RTV Belgrade correspondent in Knin, and later a main editor of RTV Belgrade) was with Rašković and ‘probably informing him’ of the transcripts’ imminent publication, and that Rašković then proposed Babić as SNV president as ‘I’m finished’. At the 7 August meeting Babić heard that Bjelić had already prepared his news item on Rašković’s resignation.⁵⁸ SDS vice-president Branko Marijanović, meanwhile, recalls that Bjelić urged him to support Opačić in replacing Rašković, which he rejected. He believes, however, that this was only Bjelić’s personal initiative.⁵⁹

Opačić/Zelenbaba and Belgrade turned against Rašković partly for the same reasons: a belief that he was insufficiently hardline or perhaps insincere, which was provoked or confirmed by the transcripts.⁶⁰ But it seems unlikely that the schism in the leadership followed Belgrade’s orders, rather than, for example, Bjelić acting independently (as Marijanović believes). Opačić was very much an independent figure, and I have not seen any evidence that he ever even met Milošević. He supported the SDS running in Serbia’s elections, and when he left the SDS in September 1990 he joined the main Serbian opposition party, the Serbian Renewal Movement (*Srpski pokret obnove*, SPO), supporting its leader Vuk Drašković against Milošević.⁶¹ Zelenbaba was a similar character, and likewise joined the SPO.⁶² And, contrary to Babić’s claims, Rašković himself never suggested that Belgrade played any role in his proposal of Babić as SNV

⁵⁷ Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007).

⁵⁸ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.2 (Babić Interview), pp.31-2.

⁵⁹ Interview Branko Marijanović (Belgrade: 6/11/2007).

⁶⁰ The two were also highly ambitious, and dissatisfied with Rašković’s leadership and his promotion of Babić.

⁶¹ Miroslav Ivić, ‘Komunisti više nigdje nemaju šansi’, *Borba*, 24/5/1990, p.5. Interview Mile Bosnić, SDS official (Belgrade: 2/11/2009).

⁶² Marinko Čulić, ‘Rob države u drazavi’, *Danas*, 21/8/1990, pp.16-17. Srđan Spanović, ‘Emperor Dušan and His Parish’, *Start* (Zagreb), 19/1/1991, pp.45-7, in FBIS-EEU-91-027, 4/3/1991.

President, something for which he always took credit, despite his conflicts with both Babić and Belgrade.⁶³

⁶³ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.154-5, 203.

6.4. Babić and Belgrade

Babić: Late Joiner, Fast Riser

Babić was a late joiner to the SDS. A dentist and from 1989 an acting director of Knin medical centre, Babić had been a member of the SKH and was even a delegate at its last conference in December 1989. He played no role in the events of 1989, but by early 1990 was considering forming a party to represent the Knin region. Until the SDS's formal founding on 17 February 1990, however, he remained a SKH member and president of the SKH board in the hospital. SDS activists encountered him in their efforts to find places to hold their meetings and invited him to speak at the SDS's founding, where he was elected one of the twenty-four members of the Main Board. A few days later, with Rašković's backing, he was elected to head the party's electoral staff body, in charge of organising for the elections. He was deemed to have performed this function well, and around late April was elected head of the SDS municipal committee for Knin. After the elections Rašković then supported him as the SDS candidate for President of Knin SO.⁶⁴

Babić was very ambitious, and soon began making his influence felt. He only rose, however, because of the strong backing of Rašković. Rašković was not interested in acquiring posts or power himself, preferring to be a sort of national tribune or spiritual guide of the Serbian people - saying, for example, when declining to take the post of SNV President, that 'I will be your Khomeni', and that, when the first Serbian government was formed, he would just be director of Knin hospital.⁶⁵ He felt that Babić would be able to lead the 'hard' wing of the party, and probably also wanted to use

⁶⁴ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.2 (Babić Interview); E-PS-7-2-3 (Babić Interview), pp.9-10. Knežević, 'Srpska demokratska stranka', pp. 9-10. Opačić, pp.155-7. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.154.

⁶⁵ Interview Mile Dakić, SNV Vice-President, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 5/11/2007). Dobrica Ćosić, indeed, called him 'an anti-politician in politics'. Rašković, *Luda zemlja*, p.7. Also see: Petrović, p.17. BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, pp.4-5. Mladenović, pp.145, 150. Golubović, p.128. Dragan Pavlović, p.198.

Babić to offset the influence of Opačić and Zelenbaba, both popular and hardline figures with great ambitions who, indeed, soon tried to oust him.

It was only thanks to Rašković's backing that Babić was elected president of Knin SO on 23 May 1990. At the time he had minimal public presence - as Lazar Macura, vice-president of Knin in 1990-93, recalls, 'nobody knew [Babić] before the 1990 elections'.⁶⁶ Moreover, in his efforts to establish influence and sideline possible rivals, Babić had already alienated key people active in the SDS in Knin, including all three Sabor deputies from the municipality (Opačić, Zelenbaba and Radoslav Tanjga). They warned that Babić was power-hungry, intolerant and acted like a tyrant, and urged Rašković not to propose him for Knin president. Opačić even sent a dramatic letter to Rašković warning that Babić intended ultimately to replace them all. Nevertheless, Rašković backed Babić, who was thus elected.⁶⁷

Rašković subsequently supported Babić becoming president of the Association of Municipalities, which was natural as Knin was its centre, and they announced its formation together. Babić progressively set about building his power-base and asserting himself as the regional leader, with Rašković's support. On 6 July Babić led the opposition to the new constitutional amendments, at a meeting of Serb municipal leaders and Sabor representatives in Knin chaired jointly with Rašković. The mass rally in Srb and formation of the SNV followed, initiated by Babić together with Opačić, at first against Rašković's wishes. Against people's expectations, at the SNV's first meeting on 31 July, Rašković then proposed Babić as its president.⁶⁸ Now, as president of Knin, the Association and the SNV, Babić was a leading figure with a strong claim to legitimacy as a leader of the Serb people, at least of Krajina. Babić also set about

⁶⁶ Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007). Also: Knežević, 'Srpska demokratska stranka', pp. 11-21.

⁶⁷ Opačić, pp.155-7. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.154-5, 203, 221-2.

⁶⁸ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.154-5. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.2 (Babić Interview), pp.31-2. Interview Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 5/11/2007)

promoting his allies, including his friends and neighbours, and sidelining opponents and potential rivals such as Opačić and Zelenbaba.⁶⁹

The Sidelining of Opačić and Zelenbaba

The sidelining of popular radical Jovan Opačić, the key protagonist of events in 1989, and his main ally Dušan Zelenbaba, was important to the early rise of Babić, as it enabled him to later lead the hardline opposition to Rašković. Opačić had originally intended to be the head of government of Knin, but declined due to his disagreements with Babić, and also ultimately declined to take the post of Sabor vice-president offered by Zagreb.⁷⁰ He thus had no special function beyond being a Sabor deputy. Nor did he or Zelenbaba acquire any special post in the SNV, which Babić dominated. After the leaking of the transcripts, they then sought Rašković's resignation, but failed to win support, isolating themselves. Then, in September 1990, partly in protest at the rise of Babić, they left the SDS for the SPO and completed their sidelining from events, particularly as many condemned their departure from the SDS as treachery.⁷¹

Although Opačić and Zelenbaba were popular among the Knin public, they lacked support in the party structures. Babić's supporters told me that the two were 'bad politicians' and operatic figures who acted like hurt prima donnas, while Zelenbaba was 'a drunkard' who 'you couldn't do anything with'.⁷² As Dušan Orlović recalls, 'Those two were like characters from Disney cartoons. One was always singing some songs, the other liked to drink a lot... They weren't good enough for a serious function... Babić was

⁶⁹ Babić's friend/neighbour Dušan Vjestica, for example, rapidly became secretary of the Association, secretary of the SNV, and then president of Gračac government.

⁷⁰ Opačić, pp.155-7.

⁷¹ Petar Samardžija, 'Split in the Serbian Democratic Party: Leadership Dispute', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 29/9/1990, p.7. S. Stamatović, 'Uzdrmani, ali na nogama', *Borba*, 21/9/1990, p.3. Opačić, p.157.

⁷² Interviews with Dušan Orlović, Lazar Macura, Ratko Ličina, Veljko Popović, Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). Petar Samardžija, 'Split in the Serbian Democratic Party: Leadership Dispute', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 29/9/1990, p.7. Dejan Jović, 'Manje oduševljena, više podjela', *Danas*, 31/7/1990, pp.19-22. Dejan Jović, 'I Tuđman i Rašković rastu', *Danas*, 28/8/1990, pp.30-33.

absolutely right in marginalising them.⁷³ Babić promoted his own supporters and sidelined opponents, and proved a better politician than they. Control of a municipality, the 'base of resistance' to the Croatian authorities, also proved a much better base than public support or a position as a Sabor deputy. In addition, Babić did not play his hand too early, maintaining an alliance with Rašković that summer, unlike Opačić and Zelenbaba, who sought to remove Rašković at a moment of crisis in relations with the Croatian government.⁷⁴ Their absence from the SDS for the subsequent crucial months was then a great boon to Babić's efforts to establish himself as the dominant leader of Krajina.

Explaining the Rise of Babić

Babić certainly had negative qualities, which people such as Opačić had highlighted as early as spring 1990. He is described by many of those he worked with as ambitious, vain, arrogant, intolerant and paranoid. As Macura recalls: 'He was very severe. He had to be number one, and you couldn't oppose him.'⁷⁵ He regarded himself as a top Serbian leader, strove to concentrate all power in his hands, and would make important decisions completely independently, rejecting compromise with others. If he felt like it, he would not turn up to scheduled meetings, or arrive hours late, often because of his habit of sleeping into the afternoon. He would appoint people to top posts without even consulting them (they finding out about their appointment on the evening news), and then fall out with them and dismiss them shortly afterwards.⁷⁶ With such behaviour and

⁷³ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁷⁴ Petar Samardžija, 'Split in the Serbian Democratic Party: Leadership Dispute', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 29/9/1990, p.7. S.Stamatović, 'Uzdrmani, ali na nogama', *Borba*, 21/9/1990, p.3.

⁷⁵ Interviews: Ratko Ličina, Lazar Macura, Veljko Popović (Belgrade: 11/2007). Mičo Jelić-Grnović, *Roman o srbima* (Belgrade: Srpska knjiga Ruma, 2004), p.112.

⁷⁶ Interviews with Knin, SDS, SNV and RSK officials Lazar Macura, Vojislav Vukčević, Dušan Orlović, Slobodan Jarčević, Đorđe Bjegović, Borislav Mikelić, Branko Perić, Mile Bosnić, Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 2007, 2009, 2011). Interview Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 1/10/2009). ICTY-Milošević: Witnesses C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103501-2; Vojislav Šešelj, T43289-90; Milislav Đorđević; E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.136-43. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T9706. ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Veljko Džakula; Radoslav Maksić, T1184-5, 1197; Lazar Macura, T8206. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: DST-043. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.14.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić, 10/1991). Domovina Intercept: C2352 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 11/11/1991). Opačić, pp.155-7. Jevtić, pp.92-3. Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.385. Dan Stets, 'A Man Who Can Thwart Yugoslav Peace Hopes

ambitions, he often alienated people who did not consider him a ‘great man’,⁷⁷ a ‘king or emperor’.⁷⁸ (Babić had much in common with Milošević in this respect.)⁷⁹

Babić had other qualities that enabled his rise, however, including an impressive knowledge of the demographic distribution of Serbs in Croatia, down to each individual village.⁸⁰ His supporters, and even some of his opponents, regarded him as a decisive and practical politician who could get things done. Whereas Rašković was off touring and giving speeches at rallies, Babić remained in Knin, dealing daily with issues that arose in the region.⁸¹ People therefore looked to him as a leader, and he seems to have been good at judging the mood in the region, escalating his programme in line with it. As SDS official Mile Bosnić recalls: ‘We trusted him because we thought that he was the one who most directly and most efficiently conveyed our positions and our opinions and translated them into proposals of decisions.’⁸² Although the programmatic differences between Rašković and Babić were not great in 1990, certain hardliners clearly mistrusted Rašković, particularly since the leaks, and the same ambiguity in rhetoric that enhanced Rašković's appeal to moderates could also create suspicion among radicals, many of whom therefore rallied around Babić (whose approach concerning negotiations and the Serbian rebellion was also obviously more hardline). The division between supporters of Babić and Rašković was not simply hardliners versus moderates – many hardliners actually supported Rašković – but it is certainly true that Babić found his supporters among the hardliners alone, and it was they who formed Babić's support base. And with Opačić and Zelenbaba out of the picture, Babić was well positioned to take the lead of such people.

Milan Babić Says He Will Not Disarm Serbian Fighters In His Region.', *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3/2/1992,

⁷⁷ Interview Dušan Vještica (Belgrade: 9/11/2007).

⁷⁸ Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007).

⁷⁹ See, for example: Ćosić, *Lična istorija jednog doba, Vol. 4*. Vladislav Jovanović. Borisav Jović, *Knjiga o Miloševiću* (ICTY translation).

⁸⁰ Interviews: Ratko Ličina, Lazar Macura, Veljko Popović (Belgrade: 11/2007). Mićo Jelić-Grnović, *Roman o srbima* (Belgrade: Srpska knjiga Ruma, 2004), p.112.

⁸¹ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.2 (Babić Interview), p.23. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D313.E (Statement of Mile Bosnić), p.16.

⁸² ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić, T125647.

Rašković himself recalled that he supported Babić as a 'young man' with a 'very rational' programme 'who will have strength to lead disputes with Croatian state', even seeing Babić's 'coldness' and 'narcissism' as 'beneficial to the party'. He also maintained that Babić did not have 'charisma', but that his 'rational' programme was supported by the people, which 'also does not accept [him] as a leader, but accepts him as very useful man.'⁸³ Others, on the other hand, do recall Babić as popular and charismatic.⁸⁴ He certainly was popular later – in January 1992 British journalist Misha Glenny found that even anti-SDS moderates in Knin he had met eighteen months earlier were now supporting Babić, and he probably won the presidential elections in the RSK in late 1993.⁸⁵ However, it appears that it was only gradually, and after he acquired his top posts, that Babić established a popular presence.

Babić and Rašković attended some rallies together in the summer, but even at the mass rally in Srb, Babić only read the text of the SNV's Declaration. He emerged more into the spotlight with the controversy over the referendum and the 'Balvan Revolution'. Around autumn 1990 the official Serbian media also began promoting Babić to the detriment of Rašković. Babić critic Ilija Petrović emphasises the role of RTV Belgrade reporter Bjelić in creating Babić, acting as 'a kind of court journalist and biographer' and promoting him as 'Alpha and Omega' among Serbs in Krajina. Babić himself recalled that Bjelić would always ask him for statements, later bragging that he had 'made a politician out of me'.⁸⁶

This role should not be exaggerated, however: it is hardly surprising that, during those tumultuous months, the president of Knin, the Association and the SNV began to have a greater media presence, and Croatian media at the time already described Babić as being Rašković's number two, or even more influential than Rašković.⁸⁷ Moreover, Rašković

⁸³ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.154-5, 203, 221-2.

⁸⁴ Interview Veljko Popović (Belgrade: 8/11/2007)

⁸⁵ Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p.20.

⁸⁶ Petrović, p.15. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13003-4.

⁸⁷ Marinko Čulić, 'Rob države u drzavi', *Danas*, 21/8/1990, pp.16-17. Jasna Babić, 'Čije je oružje', *Danas*, 18/9/1990, pp.13-15. Also: S. Stamatović, 'Uzdrmani, ali na nogama', *Borba*, 21/9/1990, p.3.

rather foolishly chose this moment to go on a six-week fund-raising tour of North America, absenting himself in this key period, from mid-September to late October, so it is hardly surprising that Babić's stature grew then.⁸⁸ Babić's control of Knin Radio was probably also significant in expanding his popular base. This was a key media source in the region, and by spring 1991 was even refusing access to Rašković, on Babić's orders.⁸⁹

It is also important to note that throughout the period of their leadership struggle Rašković was actually more popular than Babić among Serbs in Croatia. Babić functioned very much as a regional leader and lacked support outside the Krajina, while Rašković appealed to moderates as well as hardliners. The closest that Babić came to reaching Rašković's popularity was in November 1990, when a poll indicated that 76% of Serbs in Croatia viewed Rašković favourably and 71% Babić.⁹⁰ However, Babić's popularity dropped significantly in December 1990, most likely because of his clashes with Rašković and the formation of SAOK, which Babić was most associated with and was probably a less popular move outside of Krajina. Then, 86% of Serbs had a positive view of Rašković but only 54% of Babić.⁹¹ These polls indicate that Rašković continued to be more popular than Babić until at least April 1991. In March, for example, 64% viewed him positively, but only 49% Babić.⁹² This suggests the limited impact that Belgrade media preference for Babić over Rašković had.

In summary, Babić rose thanks to his strategic alliance with Rašković, adept political manoeuvring and positioning himself as a seemingly effective hardline regional leader. Babić occupied a space that, in many ways, Rašković left empty and even helped Babić

⁸⁸ I. Radovanović, 'Dva rata' u mesec dana', *Borba*, 2/10/1990, p.2.

⁸⁹ S. Stamatović, 'Predsednik u off-u, raskol u etru', *Borba*, 20/2/1991, p.5. Opačić, pp.158, 160. B. Solesa, 'The Subordinate Role Separates the Fellow Fighters', *Borba*, 30/10/1991, p.4. In FBIS-EEU-91-230, 29/11/1991. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.339.

⁹⁰ Dejan Jović, 'Slavlju je kraj', *Danas*, 4/12/1990, pp.7-9.

⁹¹ Dejan Jović, 'Čemu se nadaju', *Danas*, 1/1/1991, pp.29-31.

⁹² Dejan Jović, 'Srbi otpisuju Babića' *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.37-9. And: Dejan Jović, 'Tuđman opet vodi', *Danas*, 5/2/1991, pp.29-31. Dejan Jović, 'Skok Ante Marković', *Danas*, 5/3/1991, pp.19-21. Dejan Jović, 'Manolić gubi podršku', *Danas*, 7/5/1991, pp.31-3. Dejan Jović, 'Mesić bježi Tuđmanu', *Danas*, 4/6/1991, p.11-13. Dejan Jović, 'Mesić i dalje prvi', *Danas*, 30/7/1991, pp.30-31.

to fill, Rašković preferring to be an ideologue than a governing official. Belgrade's role in his rise seems to have been limited to helping popularise him as a leader after he acquired his top posts, a role which was probably not especially significant.

Babić and Milošević

Babić is widely seen in the existing literature as being 'Belgrade's man'. Initially, however, he does not even seem to have sought contact with Belgrade. Babić reportedly said in July 1990 that the 'Bolshevik' Milošević would never support them because of their association with the Chetniks, and that they would only contact him when they had separated from Croatia, to seek Krajina's annexation to Serbia.⁹³ In August 1990, meanwhile, Babić reportedly told Rašković that he (Rašković) should be president of Serbia, and the SDS should be formed there and take over power from Milošević.⁹⁴ Babić also claimed that when he was introduced to Jovica Stanišić in late August 1990, they never really established contact, because Babić was not interested in taking any advice or orders from anyone.⁹⁵

Babić first established contact with Belgrade in mid-August 1990, over the referendum controversy and the threat of Croatian police intervention. A meeting was agreed of a SNV delegation led by Babić, and federal President Jović and Interior Minister Petar Gračanin. Although they received support over their right to a plebiscite and to self-determination, and Jović told them that the JNA would protect them, Babić told the BBC that he was disappointed they had not offered anything more substantive. Belgrade, Babić recalled, seemed to have expected a larger delegation there to air their complaints publicly, as the Kosovo Serbs had in the 1980s.⁹⁶ Later, at the beginning of October, precisely such a meeting was organised, of representatives of Serbs from all

⁹³ Milić of Mačve, pp.173-4.

⁹⁴ Interview Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 5/11/2007).

⁹⁵ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.5 (Babić Interview), pp.23-6. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T12932-3. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.4-5.

⁹⁶ BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.10. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), pp.35-6. ICTY-Milošević: E-P352.1a (Minutes of SNV, 16/8/1990).

over Croatia – about 30 in total – with Jović and Milošević. Babić was not interested in being part of such a large delegation, however, and sent others in his place.⁹⁷ It was around this time that Babić and Milošević first met, and Babić testified that Milošević actually asked why he hadn't contacted him sooner.⁹⁸

Babić claimed that this first meeting took place on the request of Rašković, then in America, in order to get Milošević's opinion on the SDS running in the recently announced Serbian elections. The meeting only lasted about half an hour, and Babić did not specifically recall anything else being discussed. He also stated, however, that the recurring topic of such meetings was the situation in Krajina, and that Milošević would generally assure him that the Serbs had the right to self-determination and would be protected by the JNA.⁹⁹

Rašković later said that he was certain that Babić and Milošević, when they established contact while he was in America, had agreed 'some other project which was not mine, and with which I would not agree'.¹⁰⁰ In May 1991 he even suggested that Babić's faction, which by then had effectively seceded from the SDS, should use instead the name of Milošević's party, the SPS.¹⁰¹ When Babić declared Krajina's annexation to Serbia in April 1991, Rašković, assuming that Babić was co-ordinating with Milošević, sent Milošević a message accusing him of conducting a politics 'of blood to the knees' and being interested only in the territory of Serbs in Croatia, rather than the people. Milošević responded that he was equally surprised by Babić's moves, that Babić did it all by his own hand and simply placed Milošević before the finished act, and that annexation put him in a very difficult position. Rašković believed Milošević and

⁹⁷ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Vojislav Vukčević, T11079-82. ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Veljko Džakula, T393-5; Ljubica Vujanić, T8480-90.

⁹⁸ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13477-8.

⁹⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13093-4, 13477-8. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.3 (Babić Interview), p.17; E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), pp.16, 23, 37, 42-3.

¹⁰⁰ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.203.

¹⁰¹ Srđan Radulović, 'Napršli štit srpstva', *NIN*, 3/5/1991.

therefore, as he said in June 1991, doubted his own prior impression of co-ordination between the two.¹⁰²

It is probably fair to assume that Milošević's direct assurance of support for self-determination gave some encouragement to Babić, and it is interesting that it was in October that the SDS formally adopted its more radical policy: territorial autonomy in federal Yugoslavia and secession in any other case. But Babić's account in The Hague suggested that the overlap of his and Milošević's programmes was coincidental, and that he had not directly coordinated the formation of SAOK, or disassociation from Croatia, with Belgrade – that, as he claimed in mid-1991, they worked exclusively according to their 'own scenario' rather than one from Belgrade, regardless of whether their politics had 'coincided'.¹⁰³ The only direct role that Babić ascribed to Milošević in SAOK's policies in this period was the decision on secession on 16 March 1991 – Milošević, he recalled, phoned him and told him to 'support Yugoslavia'. Babić said 'fine', and that afternoon the Krajina leadership met and decided on secession from Croatia. This was simply the next step in Babić's programme, however, not a policy shift, and Krajina's 'disassociation' from Croatia two weeks earlier had itself been characterised as a decision to 'separate from Croatia' and 'remain in Yugoslavia'.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, this was just Babić's interpretation of what Milošević meant, and what Babić and his allies felt was the best move at the time – as he told Hague investigators, he wasn't really sure what Milošević meant by this phrase.¹⁰⁵ The JNA was then considering a coup, and it is possible that Milošević wanted to solidify Krajina's separation from Croatia to prevent any attempt by the JNA to reverse that and force a (united) Croatia to remain in Yugoslavia. Milošević may have simply been advising Babić to take a pro-Yugoslav stance and thereby avoid arrest by the military, however - in January 1991, when JNA

¹⁰² Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.203, 230-1. Pupovac also recalls Rašković talking about this message he sent to Milošević. Interview Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 1/10/2009)

¹⁰³ Srđan Radulović, 'End of the Croatian State', *NIN*, 12/7/1991, pp.15-16, in FBIS-EER-91-109, 24/7/1991.

¹⁰⁴ As Babić himself noted at the time: Zoran Daskalović, 'Kula od karata', *Danas*, 26/3/1991, pp.23-4. 'Milan Babić on Resolution', *Tanjug*, 28/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-041, 1/3/1991.

¹⁰⁵ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.12 (Babić Interview), p.3. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.6 (Babić Interview), pp.16-18.

intervention was also being discussed, he had apparently invited Babić to stay in Belgrade for this reason.¹⁰⁶

The only other evidence I have seen on Belgrade's attitude to SAOK suggests that Belgrade advised waiting until Croatia passed its constitution before forming an autonomous region,¹⁰⁷ and Belgrade's support for Mikelić and his SPH-PJO also counts against the idea of Babić's Krajina politics being co-ordinated with Belgrade, as Mikelić favoured Croatia remaining in Yugoslavia without any Serbian autonomy.

Babić's strategy of recursive secession from Croatia probably matched sentiments in Belgrade and certainly does not seem to have received any opposition, however, and Babić and Milošević did begin forming an alliance of sorts in this period. Babić sought Belgrade's assistance in implementing his programme of secession from Croatia, and its support against Rašković, while Milošević supported the sidelining of Rašković and sought Babić's support for domestic political purposes. Babić's account suggests that the two were closest in spring 1991. From October 1990 to January 1991 (inclusive) they met six times (and spoke on the phone once), but only three of these meetings were one-to-one, and all had specific agendas. For February and March 1991, however, Babić describes a further five meetings and two phone calls, and for three of the meetings does not mention any particular purpose. Babić describes meeting Milošević before and after a trip to Geneva in mid-February, for example, without mentioning any reason for the meetings. Milošević, Babić recalled, then spoke negatively about Rašković and said Babić should 'replace him', giving direct support to his campaign against Rašković.¹⁰⁸

Babić, meanwhile, had opposed the SDS's entry into the Serbian elections, in line with Belgrade's wishes, and persuaded the SDS main board to accept this - by a majority of one - on 22 November 1990. Babić's allies then gave a direct message of pre-electoral

¹⁰⁶ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić.

¹⁰⁷ Marijana Milosavljević, 'Prof Vojislav Vukčević, Advokat: Šepanje do sledećeg rata', *NIN*, 20/3/1992, p.26.

¹⁰⁸ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13107.

support to Milošević in the Serbian elections.¹⁰⁹ Babić also adopted a more pro-Milošević stance in public, and supported the federal presidency order on disarmament.¹¹⁰ Finally, he gave Milošević direct support over the March 1991 opposition protests in Belgrade.¹¹¹ (A poll at the time indicated that 81% of Serbs in Croatia supported the disarmament order, while the Belgrade protests were apparently widely seen in the Krajina as harming Serbian unity, so these moves were not particularly controversial for Babić.)¹¹²

Even in these months, however, Babić was never as close to Milošević as, for example, Bosnian SDS leader Radovan Karadžić, who first met Milošević in September 1990 and in 1991 communicated with him by phone several times a week, sometimes daily, and, like Babić, supported Milošević on the domestic political scene in Serbia.¹¹³ (Even this close relationship did not make Karadžić Milošević's puppet, and Milošević was actually very critical of some of Karadžić's most important political moves, such as the formation of a Serbian Assembly in October 1991 and of the RS in January 1992.)¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Petar Štikovac & Marko Dobrijević, 'I na nebu, i na zemlju', *Borba*, 17/12/1990, p.2. Stefan Grubač, 'Zašto smo podržavali Miloševića', *NIN*, 14/12/1990, p.18. Stefan Grubač, 'Pitanje koje postavlja zastava u Kninu', *NIN*, 18/1/1991, p.16. Contrast: Snježana Stamatović, 'Autonomija nije pala s neba', *Borba*, 12-13/1/1991, p.5.

¹¹⁰ For example: 'Šta je rekao dr Milan Babić', *NIN*, 8/3/1991, pp.17-19.

¹¹¹ Stefan Grubač & Luka Mičeta, 'Srpska država – imperativ', *NIN*, 22/3/1991, pp.17-18. 'We Do Not Allow Fratricide of the Serbian People', *Politika*, 11/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-050, 14/3/1991. 'Knin Leader Says Croatian Law Invalid', *Tanjug*, 21/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-057, 25/3/1991. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13109. Kovačević, pp.44-5.

¹¹² Dejan Jović, 'Tuđman opet vodi', *Danas*, 5/2/1991, pp.29-31. Petar Damjanić, 'Podjelena Srbija', *Vreme*, 22/4/1991, p.29.

¹¹³ Đoko Kesić, 'Nisam Miloševićev poslušnik', *Borba*, 26/2/1991, p.7. Boško Savković, 'Predsjednik SDS Bosne i Hercegovina: Svaki potok nije granica', *Intervju*, 12/10/1990, pp.4-7. 'Serbia Said Aiding Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Tanjug*, 15/12/1990, in FBIS-EEU-90-242, 17/12/1990. Dada Vujasnović, 'A State Which Is Coming Unwound', *Duga*, 26/10/1991, pp.17-19 in FBIS-EEU-91-249, 27/12/1991. ICTY-Milošević: E-P537.2a ('The Assembly of Republika Srpska, 1992-1995', Robert Donia), p.86. ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Dušan Kozic, T36981. ICTY-Krajšnik: Witness Radomir Nešković, Vice-President of Executive Board of Bosnian SDS, T16612-16; E-D38 (Witness Statement of Dragan Đokanović), p.4; E-P64A.460.1 (Interview Jovan Rašković, *Društvo*, 22/4/1992). See also Domovina Intercepts.

¹¹⁴ Domovina Intercepts: B6846 (Karadžić-Milošević, 24/10/1991); B7016 (Karadžić-Milošević, 10/1/1992). Milošević also opposed the formation of a Bosnian SNV in October 1990 (although the SPS general-secretary had attended its foundation), in this case apparently to some effect. Donia, p.64.

Moreover, the relationship between Milošević and Babić largely broke down on 1 April 1991, when, sparked partly by mistrust of Milošević's talks with Tuđman in Karadžorđevo, Babić unilaterally declared Krajina's annexation to Serbia. Not only did Babić not tell Milošević of this, but at the time Stanko Cvijan, Serbian Minister for Serbs Outside Serbia, was present in the region to discuss co-operation with SAOK, and on the podium next to Babić when Babić made this announcement, without any warning to him.¹¹⁵ This declaration was a deliberate provocation to Serbia - 'Let them scratch their heads with what they will do', Babić thought at the time.¹¹⁶ It was partly intended as a 'test' of Milošević's intentions, partly a reflection of Babić's more radical ideology, and was probably also an attempt to further radicalise the conflict and widen his own popular support. This contradicted Milošević's strategy of only responding to steps taken by the other side and not initiating unilateral changes, and also his support for a federal Yugoslavia rather than an enlarged Serbia. Milošević therefore phoned Babić angrily demanding that he withdraw the declaration, which Babić refused.¹¹⁷ The two were thereafter in almost constant conflict over Babić's politics, which Babić would only sometimes slightly amend in response to Belgrade's demands.¹¹⁸ Moreover, in public, too, Babić would thereafter on occasion contradict or be critical of official Belgrade.¹¹⁹

Following the declaration on annexation, in May 1991 Krajina held a referendum on annexation to Serbia and remaining in Yugoslavia. Milošević insisted that the referendum only pertain to remaining in Yugoslavia, which Rašković and others in the SDS also advocated, but Babić persisted with a referendum on annexation. After the referendum Babić sent a delegation to Belgrade to present the results to the Serbian Assembly, although Milošević had asked him not to do this – another 'political

¹¹⁵ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.25 (Babić Interview), p.39.

¹¹⁶ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.12 (Babić Interview), p.9. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.17.

¹¹⁷ See Babić Hague testimonies and interviews. Also: Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-D38 (Statement of Dragan Djokanovic), p.7.

¹¹⁸ See: ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.12 (Babić Interview).

¹¹⁹ For example: 'Babić Says Presidency Session 'Doomed To Fail'', *Tanjug*, 4/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-087, 6/5/1991. Srđan Radulović, 'End of the Croatian State', *NIN*, 12/7/1991, pp.15-16, in FBIS-EER-91-109, 24/7/1991.

provocation'. The Assembly refused to receive them, but some opposition deputies did raise the issue, creating a political problem for the authorities.¹²⁰ At the end of May 1991 Babić then initiated the formation of a Krajina government with republic-level rather than province-level titles (minister, rather than secretary), which Milošević reportedly opposed.¹²¹

In April 1991, meanwhile, Babić had resolved that if annexation to Serbia was not accepted, he would initiate unification of the Croatian and Bosnian Krajinas, and gathered some Bosnian Krajina Serb officials to publicly announce this intention.¹²² This was contrary to the policy of both Milošević and the Bosnian SDS, which wished to retain Bosnia as a whole in Yugoslavia, and support its unity until others disrupted it by seeking secession. Nevertheless, Babić persisted with this policy, and in late June 1991 arranged with Bosnian Krajina officials to announce unification, despite the strident opposition of both the Bosnian SDS and Belgrade.¹²³ Babić would continue to make periodic announcements of unification with Bosnian Krajina and that he was representing their interests, to the ire of the Bosnian SDS leadership and Belgrade.¹²⁴

Meanwhile, from July 1991 Krajina began declaring its direct implementation of the laws of the Republic of Serbia, in line with Babić's annexation policy. Milošević urged Babić to copy Serbia's laws if he wished, but declare them Krajina's, but Babić ignored

¹²⁰ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.12 (Babić Interview), pp.49-51. ICTY-Martić: Ljubica Vujanić. In June he sent a similar appeal to the Vojvodina Assembly. Srđan Radulović, 'Most na Uni', *NIN*, 28/6/1991, p.20. Petrović, p.92.

¹²¹ ICTY-Martić: Witness Lazar Macura, T8201.

¹²² HDMC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 45 (JNA report, 2/4/1991), p.106. 'Republican Presidents Comments Following Meeting', *Tanjug*, 11/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-072, 15/4/1991. ICTY-Krajišnik: Witness Momčilo Krajišnik, T23042; E-177.A.1 (Momčilo Krajišnik Interview, spring 91).

¹²³ ICTY-Milošević: E-P352.46-7. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154 (Statement of Milan Babić), p.7. Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007). 'Bosanska Krajina, Serbia's Krajina Unite', *Tanjug*, 27/6/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-125, 28/6/1991. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P395.B.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 28/6/1991).

¹²⁴ Domovina Intercepts: B6625 (Karadžić-Milošević, 29/7/1991); C2521 (Karadžić-Milošević, 9/8/1991); C2375 (Karadžić-Grković-Brđanin, 16/10/1991); B9534 (Karadžić-Đokanović, 20/10/1991); C2352 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 11/11/1991); B6946 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 14/12/1991). B7077 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 15/2/1992). ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.15.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić-Grahovac-Sendić, 16/10/1991). Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.79.

him.¹²⁵ In October 1991, meanwhile, the conflict between Babić and Milošević acquired a new public dimension, when Babić publicly claimed that Milošević had tried to pressure him into accepting autonomy within Croatia.¹²⁶ And, finally, in November 1991 the two entered a final, bitter conflict over the Vance plan.¹²⁷

Thus, from April 1991 onwards, Milošević and Babić had an extremely bad personal and political relationship. This was not just a clash over one or two incidents, or a conflict that was quickly resolved as Donia asserts¹²⁸ – it was basically incessant, and over many different issues. In intercepted conversations with Karadžić from June 1991 to spring 1992, Milošević continually expressed his exasperation with Babić, calling him a 'crazy motherfucker', a 'fool', a 'jerk', a 'pig', a 'complete idiot', 'insane' and 'Tuđman's player',¹²⁹ and there were occasions where Babić failed to attend scheduled meetings, claiming to be ill, or Milošević simply refused to receive him.¹³⁰ The two were in agreement on the fundamental issue of securing Serbian territorial self-determination in Croatia, but in conflict on virtually everything else. This extremely poor relationship between Babić and Milošević from April 1991 onwards further reinforces the conclusion that their 'alliance' from late 1990 to spring 1991 was more a temporary coincidence of views than Babić actively co-ordinating with or following instructions from Milošević.

¹²⁵ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić; E-P531.52-3.

¹²⁶ 'Babić on 'Pressure' To Accept Proposals', *Tanjug*, 31/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-212, 1/11/1991

¹²⁷ Belgrade was also apparently against the proclamation of the RSK in December 1991. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić.

¹²⁸ Donia, p.76.

¹²⁹ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P395.B.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 28/6/1991). Domovina Intercepts: C2370 (Karadžić-Milošević, 8/10/1991); B6846 (Karadžić-Milošević, 24/10/1991); B6913 (Karadžić-Milošević, 23/11/1991). B6932 (Karadžić-Milošević, 11/12/1991); C2437 (Karadžić-Milošević, 10/2/1992). ICTY-Milošević: E-P154.25.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 6/12/1991).

¹³⁰ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13202; E-D333.2e (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 3/1/1992), p.2; E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.136-43. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P64A.45.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Babić, 17/6/1991).

6.5. Serbia and the Sidelining of Rašković

The Babić-Rašković Confrontation

There had already been some tensions and disagreements between Babić and Rašković in summer 1990, but Babić generally posited himself as an ally of Rašković in this period, and had not openly opposed him over the leaks.¹³¹ At the same time, Babić was clearly building up his own power-base, promoting his supporters and allies. Some key hardliners within the party, most notably founding members Marko Dobrijević and Petar Štikovac, organisational secretary and chairman of the executive board respectively, also gravitated towards him and became very close allies.¹³² In late October 1990 Babić's faction had its first open conflict with Rašković, when they denounced as unauthorised Vukčević's talks with the HDZ in Zagreb. Rašković, still then in America, wrote a letter in support of Vukčević. He and Babić then clashed openly in November 1990 over the participation of the SDS in Serbia's elections, Babić winning by a majority of one.¹³³ Babić's faction then began a campaign against Rašković, including, as Rašković noted in January 1991, following and denouncing his public statements. For example, in December 1990 the Croatian media published some positive remarks by Rašković about the new constitution. Although they were clearly taken out of context, Babić's allies publicly disassociated themselves from them, while in January 1991 they did the same over his opposition to the SFRJ Presidency order on disarmament, which they claimed could only serve Zagreb.¹³⁴ Dobrijević and Štikovac would issue statements in the name of the SDS, although Rašković's supporters claim they were not

¹³¹ Petar Samardžija, 'Split in the Serbian Democratic Party: Leadership Dispute', *Politika: The International Weekly*, 29/9/1990, p.7. S. Stamatović, 'Uzdrmani, ali na nogama', *Borba*, 21/9/1990, p.3.

¹³² Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac (Belgrade: 5/8/2007). As well as Dobrijević and Štikovac themselves, many other SDS officials confirmed to me that they were Babić's closest allies at the time.

¹³³ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.171-2.

¹³⁴ This disagreement may have been slightly bogus, as Rašković was talking of the arms Serbs had bought, which Babić's faction never actually intended to hand in. It is unclear what Rašković's stance was in relation to the police weapons. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, p.131. Petrović, p.14. S. Stamatović, 'Zbunjenost u Kninu', *Borba*, 21/1/1991, p.5.

authorised to do so, while Babić was also allegedly stacking the main board of the party with his supporters.¹³⁵

In late 1990 Babić also began to talk about creating an SDS regional board for Krajina, just as there was, for example, a regional board for Slavonia.¹³⁶ Already in January 1991 statements were issued in the name of such a board, though it was only formally founded on 16 March 1991.¹³⁷ Clearly on the defensive, in spring 1991 Rašković brought Opačić and Zelenbaba back into the party – though both radical, they were implacably opposed to Babić and now on Rašković's side. At meetings of the SDS Main and Executive Boards in February and March 1991, meanwhile, the proposal for a Krajina regional board, and the activities of Štikovac and Dobrijević, were discussed. Babić's allies claim that they had a majority in the Main Board but acknowledge that in the Executive Board of the party, composed of its founders and key leaders, Rašković won. (Rašković's allies claim that they had an overwhelming majority in the Main Board, too.)¹³⁸ The Executive Board condemned the formation of the Krajina faction as intended to break-up the SDS, and removed Dobrijević and Štikovac. At a 30 March 1991 meeting of the SDS leadership in Obrovac, meanwhile, Rašković's policy of negotiating and avoiding conflict received overwhelming support (although Babić and some of his allies declined to attend).¹³⁹

Most of the founders of the SDS, in particular, were with Rašković, even many hardliners, and Serbs outside the Krajina were nearly all associated with Rašković rather than Babić. Many of the SDS founders who supported Rašković were from the Knin Krajina and active there, and, indeed, even some key municipal mayors backed

¹³⁵ Momir Ilić, 'Odlazak pregovarača', *NIN*, 19/4/1991, p.14.

¹³⁶ Opačić, pp.157-60.

¹³⁷ S. Stamatović, 'Prvi miran san', *Borba*, 11/1/1991, p.2.

¹³⁸ Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Peter Štikovac, Mile Bosnić (Belgrade: 2007). Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.54. S. Stamatović, 'Predsednik u off-u, raskol u etru', *Borba*, 20/2/1991, p.5. Srđan Radulović, 'Naprsli štit srpstva', *NIN*, 3/5/1991. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.202, 336. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Vojislav Vukčević.

¹³⁹ Zoran Daskalović, 'Bečarac s puncanjem', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, p.20-22. Interviews: Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009); Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2007). ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103457-8. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić. Jelena Lovrić, 'We'll Go To Knin, Too...', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.18-19, in FBIS-EER-91-075, 4/6/1991.

Rašković: the presidents of Obrovac and Benkovac, for example, while Gračac, Korenica and Lapac (and Knin) were with Babić.¹⁴⁰

Rašković also seems to have been more popular than Babić in this period – even, apparently, in Knin itself, where in February 1991 a crowd actually booed Babić and cheered Rašković.¹⁴¹ The issues here were not really moderation or the political stances of the two regarding Krajina (that same crowd also cheered for Šešelj and demanded arms), but Rašković's charisma and personal popularity, which Babić could not match, and the perception that Babić was causing factional in-fighting within the SDS. Despite the insinuations of Babić's supporters about Rašković, his popularity with the public, it seems, was not particularly affected by the leaks of mid-1990, and people in Knin did not generally accept the notion that he was a traitor to the Serb cause.¹⁴²

Despite all these strengths on Rašković's side, however, Babić was the ultimate victor of this struggle. His base in the Knin region was strong enough to maintain his position. Rašković could not remove him: regardless of popular opinion, Babić held the reins of power and had control of the administration, police and local media. Babić was president of the SNV and SAOK, and his opponents could not contest his legitimacy without bringing into question these structures which they had themselves helped create.

¹⁴⁰ Of the initial 17 organisers of the SDS, I was able to determine the approximate political stances of 14. Of these, 8 (including Rašković) supported Rašković and 6 Babić in their 1991 conflict. But although some of them were simultaneously open to talks, at least 5 of Rašković's 7 supporters had essentially hardline positions, supporting the creation of SAOK and then its secession from Croatia. Branko Popović, pp.193-4. Bogoljub Popović. ICTY-Martić: Witness Branko Popović, T8084. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Veljko Džakula, T399. Interviews: Veljko Džakula and Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 2009); Branko Perić, Branko Marijanović, Ratko Ličina and Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2470 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 30/8/1994); Witness DST-043. ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Borivoje Savić; Goran Hadžić; Vojislav Vukčević. I. Radovanovic & V. Ilic, 'The Dilemmas of Natural Allies', *Borba*, 8/2/1991, p.4, in FBIS-EEU-91-034, 20/2/1991. See earlier information about Dušan Zelenbaba.

¹⁴¹ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.221-2. BBC-DOY: Vojislav Šešelj, pp.4-5. Also: ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13017, 13565. I. Radovanovic & V. Ilic, 'The Dilemmas of Natural Allies', *Borba*, 8/2/1991, p.4, in FBIS-EEU-91-034, 20/2/1991.

¹⁴² Ibid. Babić allies told me that Rašković's daughter was married to a relative of Šibenik police chief Ante Bujas (in fact, the Bujas she was married to was no relation), and there was also talk that Rašković's father had served the NDH. Interviews: Marko Dobrijević, Petar Štikovac, Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 8/2007, 7/2009). ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.10 (Babić Interview), pp.13-14. Barić, *Špraska pobuna*, pp.214-5.

The formation of the SAOK government in May 1991 illustrates this well. Supposedly a government principally of technical experts, it was in fact stacked with Babić's supporters, many of them his politically unknown friends and neighbours, overwhelmingly from Knin. Although unhappy with their exclusion from the government, Rašković's allies seem to have accepted its formation - it was, evidently, difficult for them to contest Babić's legitimacy without also bringing Krajina into disrepute and themselves appearing factional.¹⁴³ Babić also continued to develop further institutions to give him both legitimacy and freedom to act independently, creating a SAOK Assembly which seems to have been very subordinate to him (Rašković later called it 'Babić's Assembly'), and upgrading his Krajina SDS 'regional board' to a 'main board', developing it as a de facto separate party.¹⁴⁴

Babić's ultimate triumph then seems to have been secured by the continuing radicalisation of the situation in Croatia, which, as Rašković himself acknowledged, gave Babić more popular support and legitimacy. As Knin and Zagreb escalated their stances, by March 1991 Babić had declared secession from Croatia, an apparently popular move.¹⁴⁵ The first armed conflicts and deaths further decreased the relevance of Rašković, who struggled to embrace war and still occasionally found himself advocating pacifism and negotiations, out of step with the Knin Krajina public. The 30 March 1991 meeting where the SDS decided in favour of negotiations, for example, was immediately followed by a Croatian operation against Krajina forces Babić had sent to Plitvice, Korenica, which brought the first deaths of the war and the arrest and beating of a number of SDS officials.¹⁴⁶ The last three Serb-majority municipalities yet to join

¹⁴³ Only one Rašković ally, Dušan Štarević, was given a post, as vice-president.

¹⁴⁴ Ljuba Stojić, 'Bio sam i junak i izdajnik', *NIN*, 20/12/1991, p.18. Srđan Radulović, 'Naprsli štit srpstva', *NIN*, 3/5/1991.

¹⁴⁵ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, pp.221-2.

¹⁴⁶ Zoran Daskalović, 'Bečarac s punčanjem', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, p.20-22. Interview Mile Bosnić (Belgrade: 11/2007). ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Goran Hadžić, Boirvoje Savić. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13953-4. Jelena Lovrić, 'We'll Go To Knin, Too...!', *Danas*, 9/4/1991, pp.18-19, in FBIS-EER-91-075, 4/6/1991. HDMC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 45 (JNA report, 2/4/1991), p.106. This operation was insisted on by Boljkovac, the most prominent moderate in the Croatian government, against the wishes of Tuđman, who did not want to complicate his negotiations with Milošević – again showing how the 'security dilemma' was fuelling the conflict. Boljkovac, pp.231-2.

Krajina then did so, while Babić declared annexation to Serbia.¹⁴⁷ The escalating conflict also increased pressures not to be seen as someone causing division, with mounting accusations of 'treachery' and physical threats towards moderates.¹⁴⁸ In mid-July 1991, for example, Veljko Džakula had to temporarily flee to Belgrade after rebel hardliners threatened to kill him, and there was even the first murder of a Serb moderate: Goran Dmitrović, a leading activist of the SK-PJ in Lika, was arrested by Krajina police and died from beatings.¹⁴⁹

In addition, Rašković left the region in early 1991. Unable to live safely in Šibenik (despite some Croatian police protection), after his daughter was assaulted in Zagreb Rašković took a job in Belgrade and resettled there. Rašković described this as a career move, but it seems that Babić had also pressured him and made clear he was unwelcome in Knin.¹⁵⁰ Politically, it was certainly an unwise move, like his earlier trip to America: he 'excluded himself' and 'turned himself into an adviser in the background'.¹⁵¹ Rašković continued to visit the region, but living outside Croatia/Krajina undoubtedly decreased his relevance.

Thus, despite Rašković having greater popular support within and outside the Krajina, including in the party apparatus, Babić was able to triumph in 1991 because he held the

¹⁴⁷ FBIS-EEU-91-062, 1/4/1991.

¹⁴⁸ Opačić, pp.166-7. ICTY-Martić: E-1e (Communique of the SDS Krajina, 7/1991); Witness Veljko Džakula. Srđan Radulović, 'Jovo – Milane!', *NIN*, 5/7/1991, p.27. Interview: Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 1/10/2009). Marijana Milosavljević, 'Prof Vojislav Vukčević, Advokat: Šepanje do sledećeg rata', *NIN*, 20/3/1992, p.26. 'Commentary on Serbian-Croatian Dialogue Cited', *Tanjug*, 14/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-051, 15/3/1991. 'Only Babić Understands Negotiations', *Borba*, 15/3/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-058, 26/3/1991. ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T10347. ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Veljko Džakula, T297-305; Goran Hadžić, T9399-400, 9410-11; Vojislav Vukčević, T11058. Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.339.

¹⁴⁹ Džakula testimonies in previous footnote. ICTY-Šešelj: Witness Mladen Kulić, T4425-6. Mamula, p.194. Email correspondence with Petar Ajdinović, JNA security officer (2011-12). Miloš Vasić, 'Neither Unity Nor Law', *Vreme*, 3/8/1992, pp.18-22, in FBIS-EER-92-110, 19/8/1992. Kovačević, p.121.

¹⁵⁰ Dragan Pavlović, pp.198-9. S. Stamatović & Z. Tarle, 'Biće tu još neprijatnosti', *Borba*, 2-3/3/1991, p.15. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13564. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Branko Popović. Tomo Kuzmanović, 'Nebeski narod traži povratak u domovinu [Interview with Jovan Opačić]', *Duga*, 21/6/1996, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!searchin/soc.culture.yugoslavia>. ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T10349.

¹⁵¹ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

reins of power, leading the SNV and SAOK, and it was difficult for his opponents to contest his authority. With Knin and Zagreb escalating their stances, Rašković outside of Croatia, and pressures on moderates mounting, Rašković and his key allies' sidelining became complete. Babić was the man of the hour and increasingly won popular support, such that by January 1992 even moderates in Knin who had opposed the SDS in 1990 were with him.¹⁵²

The Role of Serbia

The key question is: how important was Belgrade's influence in the rise of Babić as the leader of Krajina and his triumph over Rašković? I do not believe it was particularly significant, for the following reasons. Firstly, Babić had already acquired his top posts and become Rašković's number two before Belgrade seems to have had any role in supporting him. The Belgrade media may have subsequently helped build his public image, but it was natural that he was in the media at the time, and surely also very significant in this respect was Babić's control of local media such as Knin Radio. Secondly, Babić was never as popular as Rašković during the main period of their conflict, even in Knin, and his subsequent popular support seems to be explained by the onset of the conflict with Croatia rather than media support from Belgrade. And, in fact, as Belgrade was in conflict with Babić from April 1991, Rašković seems to have again received some generous media coverage, and yet he lost his popular standing in the region.¹⁵³ This seems to have particularly been the case in late 1991 and early 1992, when Milošević's conflict with Babić reached its peak (and Milošević even allegedly asked Rašković to write an article diagnosing Babić as mad), but it was not enough to restore Rašković to a position of any relevance in Knin.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p.20. Also: Jelić-Grnović, p.275

¹⁵³ For example: Slobodan Reljić, 'Masa gora od čopora', *NIN*, 10/5/1991, pp.20-23. Uroš Komlenović, 'Sačuvati srpski obraz', *NIN*, 31/5/1991, p.12.

¹⁵⁴ Rašković agreed, on the condition that he could pronounce the same diagnosis for Milošević. Dragan Pavlović, p.199.

Could Belgrade's backing have increased Babić's support among the municipal and party apparatus? If so, Belgrade's influence cannot have been particularly strong, because most of the party apparatus backed Rašković, not Babić. Moreover, this would fail to explain why those who backed Babić then generally supported him in his battles with Belgrade in 1991, with only a few of his allies gradually shifting towards Belgrade towards the end of the year, for a variety of reasons (discussed in the following chapter). That Babić's strength was based not on the backing of Belgrade but an independently developed support base in Krajina, however, does explain this.

This is not to say that Belgrade's backing had no role at all. The SDS sought Serbia's support for their struggle, and generally wanted to maintain good relations with Milošević: hence, for example, Rašković's open letter to Milošević in September 1990, and the November 1990 vote not to participate in the Serbian elections. Already in January 1991 Rašković felt obliged to deny rumours that he had poor relations with Milošević, claiming on the contrary that they had long and serious conversations, and that he enjoyed Milošević's support.¹⁵⁵ Belgrade does not appear to have had a particularly direct role in this leadership contest, however. SDS officials could (narrowly) be won over by arguments against participating in Serbia's elections so as not to cause a conflict with the Serbian government (and opposition), but not, it seems, to support the sidelining of Rašković.

In November 1991 Rašković and his associates launched a new public assault on Babić, calling for his resignation, and they explained their recent passivity partly by reference to Belgrade's previous support for Babić (as well as maintaining Serbian unity).¹⁵⁶ However, they had been very active opposing Babić up until July, and the onset of war was probably the key factor explaining their brief period of passivity. As Rašković later said, he preferred 'even an undemocratic, even communist Krajina [to] Krajina in an Ustasoid state.'¹⁵⁷ In addition, from April 1991 onwards on some key issues, such as

¹⁵⁵ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.127-32.

¹⁵⁶ 'SDS Urges Krajina's Babić To Resign', *Tanjug*, 15/11/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-222, 18/11/1991.

¹⁵⁷ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.230.

annexation to Serbia, Rašković was actually closer to Belgrade than Babić. It is possible that, despite this, Babić tactically cultivated the idea that Milošević stood behind him. In January 1992 Milošević sent Babić an open letter concerning his continued opposition to the Vance plan, and he noted that 'It has become obvious for quite some time that you have been creating an impression among the citizens of Krajina that you make your decisions... following agreement with the Serbian leadership', a notion Milošević wanted to correct.¹⁵⁸ In June 1991, indeed, Babić had falsely told Bosnian Krajina representatives that Milošević approved their unification project.¹⁵⁹ Rašković and the anti-Babić wing of the SDS were, however, aware of his disputes with Milošević over annexation and the referendum, undermining the notion that perceived support from Belgrade for Babić could have discouraged Rašković from opposing him.

Belgrade did assist Babić in a more indirect manner, through its public and private support for the hardline stance favouring Serbian self-determination, hardline media and, later, the provision of the means to militarily effect that self-determination. The slide to war was certainly influenced by Belgrade's hardline stance, and if Belgrade's encouragement had been in the opposite direction – in favour of peace and compromise – it seems reasonable to assume that moderates would have had a greater chance of success in these inter-party struggles. The issue of the vast gap between HDZ and SDS ideas would certainly have remained, however, and Belgrade's direct role and influence over the SDS, Babić and Rašković, appears to have been very limited.

¹⁵⁸ ICTY-Milošević: E-D40a.

¹⁵⁹ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.5.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić, 20/6/1991). Domovina Intercept: B6974 (Karadžić-Kuprešanin, 27/12/1991). Similarly: Mihajlo Knežević, pp.42-3.

6.6. Conclusions

Although SDS leaders benefited from the Serbian media's openness to Croatian Serb nationalists, their movement was autonomous and independent, with few connections with official Belgrade at first. Belgrade had very limited influence over political developments in Krajina in 1990 and 1991, and the people it might have chosen to support, such as former communist Borislav Mikelić, quickly lost out to the SDS. Both Babić and Rašković were fundamentally independent figures with their own, independent politics. Neither operated on instructions from Belgrade or even particularly co-ordinated with Milošević with regard to their key political stances. Babić does seem to have positioned himself as an ally of Belgrade against Rašković in late 1990 and early 1991, supporting Milošević's political position within Serbia, but the similarity of their politics regarding Krajina seems to have been the result of coincidence rather than co-ordination, and was soon replaced with a bitter and enduring conflict. Rašković, Babić and other SDS figures seem to have arisen autonomously, from local circumstances, and although Belgrade evidently preferred Babić to Rašković, it does not seem to have played a significant part in Babić's rise or his ultimate triumph over Rašković.

Serbia's support for hardline politics naturally had some influence on the situation in Croatia, as without it war would have been a much less viable option, but Belgrade was not directing SDS leaders and had little direct influence on them. If we want to understand political developments in Krajina in 1990-91, we must look above all at what was going on internally within the region, within Croatia, and on the Knin-Zagreb axis, rather than to Belgrade.

Chapter 7: Serbia and the Serbian Rebellion in Krajina: Martić, 'Frenki', 'Captain Dragan' and the 'Parallel Structure'

Knin police inspector Milan Martić was a key leader of the Serb rebellion in Krajina in 1990, and in January 1991 would be appointed head of the Krajina Secretariat of the Interior (SUP). The Krajina SUP in the first half of 1991 was the main rebel armed force in the Knin Krajina, and was augmented in that period by an expansion of its numbers and, from spring 1991, the formation of a training camp in Golubić, Knin, out of which new units and 'special forces' would emerge.

In The Hague, Martić was portrayed by Milan Babić and the OTP as a puppet of Belgrade, the key figure in an alleged 'parallel structure' in the Krajina that actually took its instructions from the Serbian MUP/DB, and ultimately Milošević, rather than local political leaders such as Babić or Rašković. This 'parallel structure' purportedly orchestrated the descent into war in Croatia. The Golubić camp, meanwhile, has been seen as a project not of local Krajina structures, but of the Serbian DB, to create its own secret fighting units under the command of agent Franko "Frenki" Simatović – the 'Red Berets'. Australian Serb émigré 'Captain Dragan' (Dragan Vasiljković) supposedly played a key role in this project as a contractor of the DB, with the special units that came from Golubić being under the direct command of himself and Frenki, and then playing a pivotal role in escalating the war, and the ethnic cleansing of Croats. Martić's alleged collaboration with the DB on this project is in turn seen as confirmation of his role as part of Belgrade's 'parallel structure'.¹ The little that has been written on these topics in the secondary literature has included similar assessments.²

The topics covered in this chapter are at the very heart of this thesis: the extent to which Belgrade, and Milošević, was controlling or directing developments in Croatia. In The

¹ See OTP Briefs in Milošević, Babić, Martić, Stanišić/Simatović and Hadžić cases.

² CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.1*, pp.83-5, 94, *Vol.2*, pp.25-33. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.58.

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Hague the argument was made, in considerable detail, that Serbia directly controlled Krajina Serb rebel forces through Martić, Frenki and Dragan, bypassing Babić and Rašković. It is therefore essential to examine those relationships. In addition, Martić was an absolutely key personality in the Krajina/RSK, from its origins in 1990 to its fall in 1995. As Interior Minister he was in many respects the most powerful figure within the Krajina in 1992-93,³ after Babić's fall from power, and from 1994 to the RSK's fall he served as its President. In order to gain a full understanding of Krajina-Belgrade relations it is essential to understand Martić and his origins. Fathoming the precise role of the Serbian DB in Krajina in 1991, and the extent to which it could influence or direct Martić and/or the forces that came from Golubić, is also critical for an analysis of Belgrade's policies and intentions towards Croatia.

³ ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula, T404. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Sergej Veselinović. Kovačević, p.121.

7.1. Milan Martić: Belgrade's Man in Knin?

In The Hague Babić portrayed Martić as the key man in Belgrade's 'parallel structure', a puppet of the Serbian DB and ultimately Milošević. In this section I look first at the relationship between the two 'Milans', Martić and Babić, in 1991, examining Babić's claim that he clashed with Martić over his forces' provocative and aggressive actions, such as attacks on Croatian villages in the Krajina. I then examine the relationship between Martić and Belgrade, and in particular Martić's complex relationship with the Serbian DB, before ending by looking at the reasons behind the rise of Martić, and Babić's allegations of a broader 'parallel structure' in Krajina in 1991.

The Two 'Milans': Martić and Babić

We have already seen how problematic Babić's accounts are, and, most notably, how far from the truth his allegations about the Council of National Resistance (SNO) appear to have been. Far from Martić and an SNO operating independently of and in opposition to Babić, Babić actually appears to have been in charge of the SNO, and working together with Martić in autumn and winter 1990. In 1991, however, the two certainly did clash, and a severe conflict developed between them that lasted, with ebbs and flows, to the very end of the RSK's existence in 1995. In The Hague Babić claimed that they fell out because of Martić's engagement in a 'joint criminal enterprise' to provoke conflict and ethnic cleansing from spring 1991 onwards, via the establishment of new Krajina police stations and then attacks on Croatian villages.

Most of the available evidence contradicts Babić's account, however. For example, controversial actions taken by the Krajina SUP in the spring, such as establishing new police stations, followed public decisions by the Knin authorities led by Babić, refuting the notion that Martić was acting independently, and in 1992 Babić himself convincingly took credit for these actions.⁴ On 26 June 1991 the Krajina government

⁴ 'Situation in Knin, Obrovac, Benkovac "Tense"', *Belgrade Domestic Service*, 28/4/1991, and 'Knin Chapter 7: Serbia and the Serbian Rebellion in Krajina: Martić, 'Frenki', 'Captain Dragan' and the 'Parallel Structure'

'sent an ultimatum demanding unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all police and military forces' of Croatia from Krajina, and when the first Krajina attack on Croatian forces was launched a week later Martić explained it as resulting from this 'ultimatum that all Croatian forces should leave or face attack', while Babić's deputy characterised it as part of 'our plan to wipe out all Croat police who remain in Krajina.'⁵ Babić was actively involved in the organisation and mobilisation of Serb troops at the time to oppose Croatian 'aggression', and publicly insisted that 'Until Croatia suspends its armed invasion, we will have to respond to force with force.'⁶ His key ally in Banija, Dušan Jović, was also the leader of the rebellion in Glina (and has been accused of war crimes by Croatia), and Babić visited Banija together with Martić that July, apparently to help prepare the operation there, the largest one undertaken by Krajina in this period.⁷ Immediately afterwards the government then issued another ultimatum to Croatian forces to leave Krajina, while Babić announced that mixed Petrinja and Croat-majority Karlovac would be targeted next.⁸

There is only limited evidence supporting Babić's testimony, most notably a disagreement concerning Kijevo, a Croatian village in Knin municipality, in August 1991. In August 1991 Martić issued an ultimatum to Croatian forces there demanding their surrender, and also made some bombastic statements to the press about conquering the Croatian city of Zadar. He did this despite the fact that a ceasefire had just been declared by the Krajina authorities (on the urging of the SFRJ Presidency). Babić

Defense Council Requests Army Help', *Tanjug*, 28/4/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-082, 29/4/1991. 'Situation Tense; Conflicts 'Expected' Near Knin', *Belgrade Radio Belgrade Network*, 11/5/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-092, 13/5/1991. Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993.

⁵ 'Krajina Demands Croatian Forces Withdraw', *Tanjug*, 26/6/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-124, 27/6/1991. Christopher Bennett, 'Medieval legend returns of marshal Serbian rebel forces', *Daily Telegraph*, 17/7/1991. 'Croatian Militiamen Reported Killed in Ljubovo', *Belgrade Radio*, 3/7/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-128, 3/7/1991. Tyler Marshall, 'Serbs and Croats Face Off Along Frontier of Hatred', *LA Times*, 14/7/1991.

⁶ Srđan Radulović, 'End of the Croatian State', *NIN*, 12/7/1991, pp.15-16, in FBIS-EER-91-109, 24/7/1991. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1892 (Order of Mobilisation, SAOK, 11/7/1991). ICTY-Martić: Witness Zoran Lakić, T10143-4.

⁷ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, p.196; *Knjiga 4*, p.325. Jelić-Grnović, pp. 63-5. Statement of Čedomir Stefanović, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <https://sites.google.com/site/savostribac/centarzaobuku/%C5%A1amarica>.

⁸ Marc Champion, 'Serbs carve out new borders for Krajina', *The Independent*, 5/8/1991.

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accused Martić of disobedience, remonstrating with him at a session of the Krajina government. Martić apologised for 'recklessness' in his comments to journalists, and explained that the ultimatum followed attacks on his forces from Kijevo. Babić confirmed the government's support for the ceasefire, and that Kijevo was the responsibility of the JNA.⁹ Kijevo was indeed conquered shortly after this - but this was initiated by the JNA, not Martić, after Croatian units attacked JNA troops.¹⁰

In October 1991, meanwhile, *NIN* correspondent Srđan Radulović reported that 'Martić's fighters show that they are not quite so inclined to the war-negotiating principle of war-making, which the military command of the JNA introduced. From people close to Babić and Martić we can find out that Babić more and more often reproaches Martić, who evidently considers that every war is led to victory, and not for an illusive truce.'¹¹ At the time, Babić's allies argued that the role of Martić's special forces had been superseded by the JNA, which 'with strong systems and modern weapons... alone can thwart the power of Croatia',¹² and one Krajina DB report suggests that Babić wanted to disband Martić's forces, accusing them of being a 'mob' engaged in looting.¹³ At the same time, however, Babić himself had an expansive vision of Krajina borders, and key allies of his were themselves highly critical of the JNA for not being aggressive enough (Babić accusing it of containing 'traitors').¹⁴ Sometimes Babić's stances were more extreme than Martić's: in early September 1991, for example, he publicly denounced some local peace agreements brokered by the JNA in the Knin area, while in late 1991 he appears to have been unhappy that additional territories were not

⁹ C.C., 'Creation of Larger Defence Structures', *Borba*, 21/8/1991, p.10, in FBIS-EEU-91-135, 11/9/1991. BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, p.17; Milan Martić, p.9. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, p.206.

¹⁰ HMDC-DR: *Knjiga 1*, pp.257-60, 262-4. 'Croatian Troops Withdraw From Kijevo, Vrlika', *Tanjug*, 27/8/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-167, 28/8/1991. 'Uvođenje 3. bojne 113. brigade na crtu odbrane Skradinskog zaleđa', 3/2/2011, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.novi-tjednik.hr/zupanija/zupanija/6192-feljton-12.pdf>, p.8.

¹¹ Srđan Radulović, 'Politička geometrija', *NIN*, 4/10/1991, p.15.

¹² B. Solesa, 'The Subordinate Role Separates Fellow Fighters', *Borba*, 30/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-230, 29/11/1991

¹³ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, Document 226 (Krajina DB note, 22/10/1991), p.408.

¹⁴ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1102 (Report on SAOK TO, 10/10/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-D333.2e (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 3/1/1992), pp.16, 19. Srđan Radulović, 'Granice po Babiću', *NIN*, 4/10/1991, p.15.

occupied.¹⁵ In December he even tried to order the bombing of Zagreb, most likely to sabotage peace negotiations.¹⁶ Nor does there did appear to have been any difference between the two concerning the ethnic cleansing of Croats - Babić stated simply that 'All those who want to leave Serbian Krajina for Croatia should be allowed to do so, and vice versa', and publicly denied detailed international reports of crimes by Serb forces.¹⁷

The fundamental reason for the conflict between Babić and Martić seems to have been rather banal, and related mainly to Babić's attempts to secure absolute power and his intolerance of opposition. Most sources indicate that the two co-operated fairly well initially, and in January 1991 Babić had Martić elected Krajina Secretary of the Interior.¹⁸ Their conflict seems to have originated in late May 1991 when the Krajina government was formed, and Babić convinced Martić to accept the post of Defence Minister, in charge of the new special forces.¹⁹ Babić, as he later explained, wanted to 'weaken' and 'outwit' Martić by transferring him to this new post, which, although it 'would have been seen as powerful', 'in terms of the actual remit... was much less important'.²⁰ The new Interior Minister, Babić ally Dušan Vjestica, then attempted to remove all of Martić's men from their command posts in the police. The police refused to follow his orders, while Martić now rejected his transfer. At the end of June 1991, Babić gave in and had Martić re-elected Interior Minister.

Babić claimed that it was due to Serbian DB instructions that Martić decided to reject his transfer. However, a realisation by Martić that he had been tricked – that this was not a promotion, but an attempt to 'outwit' and sideline him - surely sufficiently accounts for his change of heart. Babić tended to promote those absolutely loyal to and dependent on

¹⁵ ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.136-41. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.282-3.

¹⁶ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, pp.575-7. Milan Milošević, 'Babić Caput', *Vreme News Agency Digest*, 13/1/1992.

¹⁷ 'Babić: Krajina Plans To Recognise Slovenia', *Tanjug*, 28/12/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-251, 31/12/1991. 'Calls for Investigation', *Tanjug*, 18/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-013, 21/1/1992.

¹⁸ Interviews: Mile Dakić, Mile Bosnić, Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 2007, 2009). ICTY-Martić: Witnesses MM-003; Veljko Džakula, T396. See earlier conclusions on the SNO.

¹⁹ Interview Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 5/11/2007). ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Sergej Veselinović, T11749.

²⁰ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1406. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.5 (Babić Interview), pp.11-13.

him, surrounding himself with people who looked up to him as a 'king or emperor'.²¹ He was, SNV Vice-President Dakić recalls, bothered by Martić's popularity among the people, and wanted 'full control', saying in late 1991 that he did not need an Interior Minister who had his photo published in all possible magazines.²² Similarly, Babić told Serbia's Minister of Defence in late 1991 that he wanted an 'expert' not 'a media star': he did not need Martić 'as a personality' and could not tolerate a minister in his government opposing him, claiming 'everything could be much better organised with somebody else'.²³ Martić, on the other hand, insisted on protecting his own authority and role. From July 1991 onwards he and Babić were also in conflict over the organisation of Krajina armed forces: Martić wanted to be in command of them, or at least retain command of his police and special units, while Babić wanted to create a new system under his control, and to subordinate or eliminate the role of Martić. The issue primarily seems to have been about who, of the two, was in charge, rather than about ethnic cleansing or war operations.²⁴

By late 1991 Babić did blame Belgrade for his problems with Martić, at least in part,²⁵ and it seems likely that by that autumn Belgrade was backing Martić, particularly given his connections with the Serbian police and Milošević's problems with Babić.²⁶ However, it was not Milošević or the Serbian MUP/DB alone that sympathised with Martić – so did Rašković, his allies and former allies in the Krajina; some of Babić's supporters, who fell out with him on this issue; the JNA, which saw him as a communist and pro-Yugoslav 'who belongs 'to us'', unlike the nationalist Babić; Karadžić and Čosić, who saw him as a 'man of the people' and 'more honest', as opposed to Babić, a 'selfish tyrant' who 'likes power'; and even anti-war Croatian Serb moderates, who thought that

²¹ Interview Lazar Macura (Belgrade: 11/2007).

²² Interview Mile Dakić (Belgrade: 5/11/2007).

²³ ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.136-41.

²⁴ See for example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić. ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.136-41. ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Milan Dragišić, Radoslav Maksić. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.205-7.

²⁵ ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.136-41. ICTY-Milošević: E-D333.2e (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 3/1/1992), p.21. 'Krajina Officials Assess Paris EC Talks', *Belgrade Radio Network*, 31/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-212, 1/11/1991.

²⁶ Radulović, *Sudbina krajine*, p.36. Mamula, pp.236-7.

Babić was the main problem and Martić was 'more reasonable'.²⁷ Martić had a strong power base in the police and was a popular and respected figure, and Babić's attempts to remove him simply were not widely supported.²⁸

Martić and Belgrade

As discussed in Chapter 5, it is probable that figures from the Serbian MUP/DB visited the Krajina in autumn or winter 1990, and that Martić established contact with them. Then Serbian Minister of the Interior Bogdanović, indeed, has recalled that they 'had ties with' Martić, helping him 'begin from nothing'.²⁹ Such contact need not have been conspiratorial or imply that Martić was secretly Belgrade's man in Knin, however. Martić's contacts with the Serbian police were of a far lower stature than Babić's contacts in Belgrade, which from October 1990 included direct contact with Milošević, and this did not make Babić Belgrade's puppet.

Martić thought highly of Milošević – as he later recalled with disdain, he saw him as a 'God, and saviour of Serbs' at the time – but it was apparently only in July 1991 that the two first met, by which point Babić had met Milošević about fifteen times.³⁰ Martić thus encountered Milošević quite late in comparison with other Serb leaders. This is not surprising, as he was merely a minister in the Krajina government, but it does

²⁷ Rašković, *Duša i sloboda*, p.224. Radulović, *Sudbina krajine*, p.36. 'SDS in Knin Forms Two Factions', *Belgrade Radio*, 22/2/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-036, 24/4/1992. Mamula, p.236. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, pp.508-9. Domovina Intercepts: C2352 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 11/11/1991); B7077 (Karadžić-Ćosić, 15/2/1992). ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Statement of Milan Martić, para 48. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P356.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić-Radić-Brdanin, 18/11/1991). Interviews: Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 1/10/2009); Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007).

²⁸ Even someone like TO officer Radoslav Maksić, who Babić brought into Knin, concluded that Babić, rather than Martić, was at fault in their conflict. ICTY-Martić: Witness Radoslav Maksić.

²⁹ Nenad Stefanović, 'Logistika službe za volju naroda', *Duga*, 7-20 January 1995, p. 23, quoted in Williams and Cigar, footnote 201.

³⁰ Filip Švarn, 'Dossier: The Fate of Krajina Serbs – To Stay or to Leave', *Vreme News Digest Agency*, 3/8/1996. ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić, T38132; Witness Statement of Milan Martić, para 43. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness JF-032, T4640-1. ICTY-Hadžić: T12195-6. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.5.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić, 20/6/1991). According to some press reports Martić also claimed to have spoken with Milošević on the phone in early April: Krmpotić, p.47.

undermine the notion that he was at the helm of Milošević's 'parallel structure' in Krajina.

Martić had an enduring relationship with Jovica Stanišić, and it seems likely that this relationship had begun by early 1991 at the latest.³¹ Babić presented Martić as a puppet of Stanišić and the DB; former Yugoslav defence secretary Branko Mamula also writes that in summer 1991 Milošević's DB 'held all the strings in the Krajina'.³² However, MM-003 and Babić both presented evidence that Martić and Stanišić actually had more of a co-operative relationship, than one of subordinate/boss. MM-003 explained that Martić came to like Stanišić 'because anything he asked for, he would always get', and he regarded him as his 'brother', who would do anything he asked of him.³³ Similarly, describing the only time he saw the two together in 1991, Babić recalled that they were '[q]uite friendly, they cooperated closely, and Martić listened carefully to what Stanišić had to say.' He added, in contradiction of his whole thesis, that 'It wasn't any sort of formal subordination but rather taking advice from a senior colleague. It didn't involve any sort of obedience.'³⁴

MM-003 did claim that Stanišić had 'ordered' Martić to establish additional police stations in Krajina, expanding the territory under Serbian control. However, this was Babić and Martić's own policy – the decisions on establishing new police stations in Knin, for example, were issued by Knin authorities led by Babić. MM-003 and Babić did not provide any concrete examples of Martić following instructions from Stanišić. But, on the contrary, we can find many examples of Martić acting *counter* to Belgrade's wishes in 1991.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Belgrade sometimes favoured moderation, and yet Martić followed Babić's orders in sending units to Plitvice and elsewhere, from March to June

³¹ See for example: BBC-DOY: Milan Babić, pp.4-5. Mamula, p.236. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P153.10.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 9/9/1991).

³² Mamula, p.237.

³³ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003.

³⁴ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, 1525.

1991, apparently displeasing Belgrade.³⁵ Martić also angered Milošević with his public declarations in April that he had promised to send arms to Krajina, with Milošević reportedly asking Babić why he didn't 'dismiss that fool'.³⁶ And then in June, when Martić held a parade of his special forces in Bosnia without consulting Babić – the only police action in this entire period definitely not authorised by Babić - Milošević referred to it privately as 'a stupidity which makes a lot of problems to me and to [us all]', and agreed with Karadžić that 'it cannot be the politics that serves the police, it must be vice versa'.³⁷ He expressed exasperation with the Babić-Martić situation: 'First he is not listening to him, then he is doing things how he wants, and once like this, the other time like that.'³⁸

There is no evidence that Martić opposed Babić on the policy of annexation to Serbia or any of the other issues on which Babić and Belgrade clashed on that spring and summer. On the contrary, Martić actively supported unification with Bosnian Krajina.³⁹ In June 1991 he even tried to persuade Bosnian Krajina deputies to support it by falsely claiming, along with Babić, that Milošević had endorsed it.⁴⁰ It was not until the last months of 1991 that any notable political differences emerged between Babić and Martić, and despite Belgrade's pressure Martić joined Babić in rejecting the Vance plan for quite some time. Martić even went so far as to say, at a meeting of the Yugoslav Presidency with Krajina leaders in December 1991, also attended by Milošević, that in their opposition to the plan they were prepared to rebel against Belgrade just as they had against Zagreb.⁴¹ Martić does seem to have been the first significant person in Krajina to

³⁵ Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993.

³⁶ Silber & Little, p.146.

³⁷ Domovina Intercept: B6549 (Karadžić-Milošević, 11/6/1991). Babić, by contrast, testified that 'Martić... could not have organised such a parade without coordinating this with people in Belgrade', i.e. the DB, further undermining the credibility of his 'parallel structure' thesis. ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154 (Witness Statement of Milan Babić), p.7.

³⁸ Domovina Intercept: B6549 (Karadžić-Milošević, 11/6/1991).

³⁹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D312 (Martić Interview in *Pobjeda*, 7/7/1991). ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić, T38106. Biserko, p.430.

⁴⁰ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.5.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić, 20/6/1991). Domovina Intercept: B6974 (Karadžić-Kuprešanin, 27/12/1991).

⁴¹ ICTY-Perišić: E-P165.E (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 12/12/1991), p.44. And: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2364.E (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 9/12/1991), pp.35-6; E-D1582 (Krajina

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come to support the plan, in mid-January 1992, having been persuaded by Jović, but his strident opposition for almost two months is telling.⁴²

Thus, despite his sometimes poor and hostile relations with Babić, in 1991 Martić supported the Krajina politics that Babić created, even when they were opposed by Belgrade, while in relation to police operations that Belgrade was unhappy with, here too he appears to have been following Babić's orders and his own agenda. The agendas of Martić and Belgrade did not always coincide, and, although their divergences were less pronounced than those of Babić and Belgrade, these differences clearly show that Martić was not Serbia's puppet nor operating on its instructions.

Martić, the Krajina Police and the Serbian DB

Martić's relationship with Stanišić, Frenki and others in the MUP/DB was always complicated. For example, Martić's advisor in 1994-95 Slobodan Jarčević recalls that whenever Martić, then RSK President, was in Belgrade, he would go to Stanišić for advice which, Jarčević implies, amounted more to instructions.⁴³ Martić hoped, according to Jarčević, that Stanišić would be able to force Milošević to take a more pro-RSK stance, including military intervention if Croatia attacked.⁴⁴ In the same period, however, he clashed fiercely with Stanišić over the DB's attempts to separate the MUP in East Slavonia from Knin.⁴⁵ As Milošević said at the time, the two had 'argued and made up ten times' already.⁴⁶

A picture emerges for the entire period of 1990-95 that Martić, unlike Babić, was very happy, and wanted, to co-operate closely with Belgrade in the fulfilment of their joint

MUP, 12/12/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-D333.2e (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 3/1/1992), pp.6-7.

⁴² Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, p.384. ICTY-Martić: E-950 (Martić Interview, 1/1992). BBC-DOY: Milan Martić, p.10.

⁴³ Interview Slobodan Jarčević, RSK Foreign Minister, 1992-94 (Belgrade: 2011).

⁴⁴ Interview Slobodan Jarčević (Belgrade: 2011). Jarčević, pp.581-2, 586.

⁴⁵ See, for example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-1605 (Intercept Martić-Milošević, 4/10/1994). Jarčević, pp.581-2.

⁴⁶ ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1425.E (Mladić Diary, 4/9/1994-28/1/1995), p.98.

goal: all Serbs in one state. He was often open to accepting Belgrade's advice as the stance of more learned and senior people than himself. A prime example of this was when he ran for RSK President in late 1993, and, once elected, advocated the appointment of Borislav Mikelić as Prime Minister. Martić's presidential campaign was directly supported by Belgrade, on whose urging he probably ran in the first place, while Mikelić was clearly Belgrade's candidate for Prime Minister.⁴⁷ In 1994-95, meanwhile, Martić was a strong supporter and collaborator of Belgrade in 'Operation Pauk', a joint operation led by the Serbian DB to assist the forces of Muslim rebel Fikret Abdić around Bihać in Bosnia, even though this risked some dilution of Martić's own authority in the RSK.⁴⁸

However, Martić was also often highly critical of Belgrade as not nationalist enough, even in 1992-93, and he generally protected the Krajina MUP's autonomy and authority, as well as his own position, from any encroachments from Serbia.⁴⁹ Caspersen suggests that people such as Martić started out as puppets and later achieved some independence. Certainly, despite his collaboration in, for example, 'Operation Pauk', Martić in 1994-95 did come into increasing conflict with Milošević, culminating in his removal of Mikelić in May 1995, as Caspersen and Barić note.⁵⁰ However, already in 1991-92, Martić was both defying requests and instructions from Belgrade and protecting his own authority from any potential encroachment by the Serbian DB.

For example, in September 1991 the Serbian DB sent an urgent message to Martić requesting that the arrival and deployment of volunteers from Serbia's main opposition party, the SPO, be prevented, on the grounds that their intention was to take arms back to Serbia for use in overthrowing the regime. Martić refused, saying that all volunteers

⁴⁷ Interview Slobodan Jarčević (Belgrade: 2011).

⁴⁸ ICTY-Martić: E-666 (Letter from Rade Rašeta, SVK security officer). Mihajlo Knežević, p.201.

⁴⁹ For example: Vojislav Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo* (Belgrade: Srpska Radikalna Stranka, 2010), pp.591-2, 924. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1586 (RSK letter to RS, 2/4/1993); E-D1134 (Yugoslav Air Force note, 1/2/1993). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 8*, p.474. Also: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Submission: Public Versions of Confidential Exhibits Part 1 (2/4/2013), p.47.

⁵⁰ Caspersen, *op. cit.*, pp.114-20. Nikica Barić, 'O okolnostima i posljedicama smjene predsjednika vlade Republike Srpske Krajine Borislava Mikelića 1995. godine', *Istorija 20. Veka*, Vol.28, No.3 (2010), pp.151-168.

were welcome. Similarly, in July-August 1991 the DB relayed urgent instructions straight from Milošević that the changing of emblems on Krajina uniforms – the removal of the red star – must be prevented, as it could lead to conflicts with the JNA: it happened anyway.⁵¹

Martić clearly endorsed the appointment of Captain Dragan to the Golubić camp in spring 1991, and also Frenki's basing himself in the region. Dragan and Frenki left in August 1991, and the Golubić camp was disbanded, above all on Babić's demand (as discussed later). However, evidence at the ICTY, most notably from MM-003, suggested that Martić was also unhappy with Dragan and Frenki trying to increase their influence over Krajina forces, and was involved in having them at first sidelined and then removed.⁵² Thus, despite his closeness with Stanišić, Martić seems to have opposed any attempt by DB figures such as Frenki to encroach on his territory.

In August 1991, apparently as part of his sidelining of the Serbian DB, Martić had arranged that they move from Knin to a new camp in Korenica, established with the support of Korenica municipal president Boško Božanić.⁵³ The Serbian DB and their chosen men (the nucleus of the 'Red Berets', discussed later) soon left for Serbia, but links persisted, and in 1992 Martić moved against some of their allies there. First, in January 1992, he ordered the disbandment of a special/paramilitary unit in Korenica which was connected with the Serbian DB and Božanić, arresting some of its members. The leader of that unit, Predrag Baklajić, fled to a Serbian DB training base in Ilok, Eastern Slavonia (and in 1997 would be honoured by them as a fallen comrade, having died in Bosnia in 1993).⁵⁴ In August 1992, the local DB in Korenica, connected with Božanić and the Serb DB, responded by arresting several local officials who had been

⁵¹ Filipović, pp.52-7.

⁵² ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-039; Goran Opačić, T18187-9; Aco Drača, T16700-2.

⁵³ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-031; JF-039. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003; E-565 (Statement of Nedeljko Orlić, 18/3/1993). Interview Dušan Orlović, head of Krajina DB, 1991-2 (Belgrade: 7/2009); E-560 (Report of Mihajlo Knežević about Predrag Baklajić, 26/1/1992).

⁵⁴ ICTY-Martić: E-563 (Information about crimes by special unit in Vrhovine, RSK MUP, 18/2/1992); E-564 (Investigation into Baklajić et al, 18/3/1992); E-565 (Statement of Nedeljko Orlić, 18/3/1993). Mihajlo Knežević, pp.70, 90-1, 113-4. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3152.E (Excerpt from Serbian DB Personnel File of Predrag Baklajić).

involved in suppressing Baklajić's unit, including the heads of the TO and DB for Lika, taking them to the Ilok camp.⁵⁵ Martić denounced these arrests and immediately moved to dismiss Dušan Orlović, head of the Krajina DB, and suspend the work of the entire service. Orlović subsequently had to leave Krajina. According to MM-003, Martić realised that Orlović was too close to Belgrade and independent of him; he also seems to have been involved in the Korenica incidents.⁵⁶ Orlović subsequently joined the Serbian DB, and Martić allegedly ordered that he, Frenki and others were to be arrested if they arrived in Krajina, and also, for some months, that the reconstituted Krajina DB was forbidden all contacts with the Serbian DB.⁵⁷

At the same time, some key members of the Krajina MUP were simultaneously employed by the Serbian MUP/DB, which may have been for financial reasons, or because they were 'on loan' to Martić.⁵⁸ (Such arrangements were common at the time – all former JNA officers in the RSK and RS armies, for example, received their salaries and pensions from Belgrade, even when those armies were in open conflict with Belgrade.)⁵⁹ In 1993 Martić even took a Serbian MUP official, Uroš Pokrajac, as his 'special advisor'.⁶⁰ Martić, it seems, was happy to co-operate with the MUP/DB, as long as he did not feel that they were affecting his authority.

⁵⁵ Mihajlo Knežević, pp.122-8.

⁵⁶ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-978 (Statement of MM-003). Also: HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 5*, pp.211, 247; *Knjiga 6*, p.162. ICTY-Martić: E-565 (Statement of Neđeljko Orlić, 1993). Barić, p.226. Radulović, *Sudbina krajine*, p.62. Kovačević, p.121. Srđan Radulović, 'Friends Behind the Wings', *Borba*, 31/8/1992, p.11, in FBIS-EEU-92-191, 1/10/1992. This was one topic on which Dušan Orlović declined to elaborate in his interviews with me, stating only that Martić and he disagreed over how to organise the Krajina DB. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁵⁷ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2684.E (Documents related to Dušan Orlović); Witness Aco Drača, chief of RSK DB (1994-95); Witness JF-039. And: ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103500-1.

⁵⁸ For example, Ilija Kojić and Rade Kostić in East Slavonia (see Chapter 8), and Tošo Pajić in Kordun. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: P2404 (List of DB Employees, 1992-96).

⁵⁹ Details on this can be found in numerous ICTY exhibits, and, in summary, the Perišić Judgement. This also applied in other sectors: former Yugoslav diplomat Slobodan Jarčević, who was RSK Foreign Minister in 1992-4 and then an advisor to Martić in 1994-95, for example, received his pay from the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry the entire time, though Milošević disliked him and Martić was increasingly conflicting with Belgrade. Interview Slobodan Jarčević (Belgrade: 2011).

⁶⁰ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-978 (Statement of MM-003); E-P1554.E; E-P1555.E; Witness DST-043.

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There can also be little doubt that in 1991 the Krajina SUP received funding from the Serbian MUP/DB. However, evidence suggests that for much of 1991 the Krajina SUP was still short of funds, and they acquired money from a variety of sources, including public donations and, later, the JNA.⁶¹ Serbia sent plenty of money Krajina's way from 1991 onwards, and Krajina and the RSK were in fact practically dependent on various forms of aid from Serbia.⁶² But it is probably more accurate to characterise this as sought and granted assistance, rather than as part of a financial relationship implying vertical subordination.

Thus, although Martić often had a good relationship with Serbian MUP/DB officials in Belgrade, and wanted to collaborate with Belgrade on the fulfilment of their joint goals, he was far from being their puppet, and from the outset, even in 1991, we can find examples showing the DB's lack of influence over him, and of him protecting his authority in the Krajina from any encroachments from Belgrade.

The Rise of Martić (1990-91)

Although Martić probably had contact with figures from the Serbian MUP/DB from late 1990 or early 1991, he followed his own, independent agenda, which until late 1991 was influenced more by Babić than Belgrade. Stepping back to examine Martić's rise from small town cop in 1990 to Krajina Interior Minister in 1991 partly explains this situation, as we can see that he arose autonomously, independently of Belgrade, developing from the start his own power base in the police and with the public. The authors of *Balkan Battlegrounds* suggest that someone of Martić's low rank must have been coached or assisted by the DB,⁶³ but, in fact, Martić just seems to have been one of

⁶¹ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.18 (Babić Interview), pp.27-9. ICTY-Babić: Defence Motion Annex 2 (Witness Statements), p.20. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness DST-043. ICTY-Martić: E-68 (RSK MUP, Milan Martić report, 19/5/1992). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, Document 113 (Minutes of Krajina Government, 1/11/1991), p.256. 'Lički Osik case', Witness Marko Dragičević, chief of Gračac and Korenica SJSs, 1991-92 (Belgrade: 4/11/2010), p.95, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>.

⁶² For example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1677 (MoD Serbia, Information on funds provided for aid to Serbs in Croatia, 18/11/1991). Stephen Engelberg, 'Serbia Sending Supplies to Compatriots in Croatia', *New York Times*, 27/7/1991.

⁶³ CIA, *Balkan Battlegrounds Vol.2*, p.26.

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the many people in the Yugoslav conflicts, like the HDZ rightists Gojko Šušak and Tomislav Merčep, who rapidly acquired top functions despite having little relevant experience or expertise.

Martić first emerged into the public eye in July 1990, when along with some SDS leaders he initiated a petition against changes in the MUP, such as the adoption of Croatian emblems. Most of the Knin police signed and it was published in *Politika*. When a MUP delegation led by Boljkovac visited Knin on 5 July in response, Martić led the charges against them. Thereafter, working with Babić, he became the unofficial leader of the rebels among the Knin police, and, after 17 August in particular, became popular as the public face of Knin resistance, famously announcing to a Croatian TV reporter in September that 'this is the people's police [which] is protecting this people... and is against the Croatian government which does us harm'.⁶⁴ Already on 21 August 1990, when his dismissal by the MUP was announced, several thousand in Knin rallied in his defence until he spoke to them.⁶⁵ In January 1991 his role as lead organiser of the resistance was confirmed when the SAOK Executive Council, consisting of presidents of the municipalities in SAOK, unanimously appointed him SAOK Minister of Internal Affairs.⁶⁶ MM-003 suggested that Martić was appointed to this position in part because of his DB connections. Babić, however, actually testified that he was then unaware of any DB connections of Martić and supported him for the post because he was a very popular figure, and he did not have an alternative candidate.⁶⁷

The fact that Martić arose from local circumstances, and had his own power base in the police and the public, explains why he was from the start independent of Belgrade. And

⁶⁴ ICTY-Martić: E-5; E-13. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003, T1980. ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula, T386, 401. Dušan Glavaš, p.29. Erceg, pp.24-8. Martić may also have lead a delegation of Knin police to see Federal Interior Minister Petar Gračanin in August 1990. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.1.10 (Babić Interview), pp.32-3.

⁶⁵ 'Sedmorica za linč', *Borba*, 22/8/1990, p.3. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-096, Knin police chief, 1990. Similarly: S. Stamatović, 'Pregovori na Plitvicama?', *Borba*, 5/9/1990, p.3.

⁶⁶ ICTY-Martić: E-181E (SAOK IV Minutes, 4/1/1991).

⁶⁷ ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1800-1. Vještica explains Martić's rise in the same way: ICTY-Babić: Defence Motion Annex 2 (Witness Statements), p.18. On Martić's popularity: Srđan Radulović, 'Ko to korača desnom?', *NIN*, 1/11/1991, p.19. Dejan Jović, 'Mesić bjezi Tuđmanu', *Danas*, 4/6/1991, p.11-13.

this power base and popularity, rather than the backing of Belgrade, sufficiently explains his successfully withstanding Babić's attempts to remove him. It was also for this reason that in 1991 Martić came to be the main leader of the opposition to Babić within Krajina.

The 'Parallel Structure' in 1991: the Krajina Opposition

In 1991 a wide variety of different political factions in the Krajina – Rašković, his allies and former allies, and some of Babić's former allies – backed Martić in his struggle with Babić. From October 1991 Martić and the opposition faction were in open conflict with Babić, who was seeking to eliminate both Martić and the power of municipal leaders who opposed him (Babić), and various accusations were thrown around by both sides. In November 1991 Babić organised the dismissal of two of his prominent critics - Krajina vice-premier Dušan Štarević and assembly president Velibor Matijašević. After this the main opposition to Babić was borne by Martić and four dissident municipal presidents in Dalmatia-Lika – two former Rašković supporters, and two former Babić allies.⁶⁸

Babić lumped all these people together as part of a 'parallel structure' allegedly controlled by the DB, though he did not present any evidence that, for example, these former Rašković allies were working with the DB. Štarević, for instance, was an SDS founder who initially wanted the party to be part of Serbia's opposition Democratic Party.⁶⁹ In July 1991 he helped found the pro-negotiations SDF, and Babić first announced his dismissal in relation to that; yet in The Hague he characterised him as part of Belgrade's structure.⁷⁰ Others simply seem to have opposed Babić's autocratic

⁶⁸ Srđan Radulović, 'Ko to korača desnom?', *NIN*, 1/11/1991, p.19. B. Solesa, 'The Subordinate Role Separates Fellow Fighters', *Borba*, 30/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-230, 29/11/1991. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*, p.408.

⁶⁹ Interview Branko Marijanović, Vice-President of SDS, 1990-91 (Belgrade: 7/11/2007).

⁷⁰ Srđan Radulović, 'Peacemakers' in Camouflage Uniforms', *NIN*, 16/8/1991, pp.14-15 in FBIS-EEU-91-133, 6/9/1991. Obrovac President Sergej Veselinović was also involved in preparations for the SDF: Zoran Daskalović, 'Three Serbian Mistakes', *Danas*, 23/7/1991, in FBIS-EER-91-118, 7/8/1991. Interview Milorad Pupovac (Zagreb: 1/10/2009). ICTY-Martić: Witness Veljko Džakula.

leadership style, which Opačić and others had highlighted as early as May 1990.⁷¹ Babić himself dated the dissident presidents' membership in this 'parallel structure' to when, in May 1991, he tried to sideline Martić and formed a Krajina government composed almost entirely of his politically unknown friends and neighbours, mostly from Knin itself, providing rather more credible reasons for these SDS stalwarts' dissatisfaction with Babić than any orders from Belgrade (reasons which have also been noted by both SDS and Croatian sources).⁷² The fact that Rašković's supporters among these dissidents had supported Rašković, despite Belgrade's obvious preference for Babić, and Babić's former supporters had supported him over annexation to Serbia in April-May 1991, despite Belgrade's opposition to that, also indicates that these people were not simply Belgrade's puppets.

It does seem, however, that these people later jockeyed for support from Belgrade, just as Babić previously had in his campaign against Rašković. For example, in early November 1991 Martić issued a public statement denying Babić's claims that Milošević had tried to pressure him to accept autonomy within Croatia, while the dissident municipal presidents declared their 'unreserved support' to Milošević as 'the only internationally recognised representative of the Serbian people.'⁷³ There is also evidence that one of the municipal presidents, former Babić ally Boško Božanić, became close to the Serbian DB, as Babić alleged.⁷⁴

There does also appear to have been some awareness in Belgrade of the opposition to Babić within the Krajina and the possibility of using that against him. As early as June 1991, for example, when there was the controversy over unification with Bosnian Krajina, Karadžić suggested to Milošević talking to the large opposition to Babić within

⁷¹ ICTY-Martić: E-988E (Witness Statement of Mile Dakić), p.7. Degoricija, p.209.

⁷² ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić, T13995. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1592. Lučić & Lovrenović, p.36. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić, T12680. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, pp.185.

⁷³ 'Krajina Denies Pressure to Accept EC Agreement', *Tanjug*, 5/11/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-125, 6/11/1991. Also: Domovina Intercept: B6742 (Karadžić-Milošević, 23/9/1991). Also see: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Mile Bosnić, T12680.

⁷⁴ ICTY-Martić: E-663 (SVK security report, 16/2/1993).

the Krajina: 'I think somebody should go to Knin, gather those people over there and tell him in front of them that he can't do it... stand on the side of the opposition, on the side of Štarević and others, and tell him, Babić, either you will work in co-operation with others and abide by the law, otherwise don't expect that we will follow you in your silly actions.'⁷⁵ In October 1991 Karadžić even suggested to Milošević that Stanišić should gather together some of the opposition and talk to them, along with himself, to force Babić to be more co-operative. Milošević, however, thought that Stanišić 'cannot do anything', and spoke of just inviting Babić for talks again.⁷⁶

Belgrade's campaign to get the Krajina to accept the Vance peace plan in late 1991 and early 1992 sheds a lot of light on these relationships. It took some time, to mid-January 1992, to persuade Martić to shift towards accepting the plan. Even then, Martić denied this at a session of the Krajina government, evidently unwilling to fully break ranks.⁷⁷ There were also some signs that the dissidents were more open to Belgrade's line. But it seems that it was only after Babić's ally (and recent promotion to head of the Krajina Assembly) Mile Paspalj finally defected on 2 February 1992 that the dissident municipalities – along with most others - declared their support for the settlement.⁷⁸ Moreover, although Babić's opponents were more willing to shift (slowly) to Belgrade's position, evidence actually points to their lack of co-ordination with Belgrade. After a number of failed attempts to convince Babić to accept the plan, in December 1991 the Yugoslav Presidency began to invite wider delegations from Krajina to talks, including all municipal presidents. The intention was clearly to try to bypass Babić or overcome his opposition by talking directly to others in the Krajina, and Milošević said to Karadžić at the time that these 'consultations with the presidents of municipalities should be supported... we have to strike them.'⁷⁹ Babić, however, responded by sending

⁷⁵ ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P395.B.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 28/6/1991).

⁷⁶ Domovina Intercept: C2370 (Karadžić-Milošević, 8/10/1991). ICTY-Milošević: E-P613.87a (Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 9/10/1991).

⁷⁷ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 4*, p.48.

⁷⁸ 'Report Views Situation, Public Opinion in Krajina', *Belgrade Radio Network*, 13/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-009, 14/1/1992, Snježana Stamatović, 'There Will Be No Letting Go', *Borba*, 18/1/1992, p.15, in FBIS-EEU-92-023, 4/2/1991. 'Serbian Krajina Communal Presidents Denounce Babić', *Belgrade RTB Television Network*, 4/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-92-024, 5/2/1991.

⁷⁹ Domovina Intercept: B6932 (Karadžić-Milošević, 11/12/1991). Also: ICTY-Milošević: E-P613.87a

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a delegation of his own choosing, excluding his opponents (apart from Martić).⁸⁰ One of the dissident municipal presidents found out about the second meeting by chance and attended, complained, and requested that he and the other dissidents be included.⁸¹ But at the third meeting on 3 January 1992, and the final, major meeting on 2 February, where Paspalj finally defected, they and others were again excluded, as they later complained.⁸² One would think that if these people really were close to Belgrade, Belgrade would have been able to at least directly inform them about these meetings.

Thus, although a few of Babić's opponents may have become close to the Serbian DB, and there is some evidence that in late 1991 they were jockeying for Belgrade's support, this was far from being a 'parallel structure' controlled by Belgrade. In fact, this was an opposition faction consisting of people Babić had alienated by his moves against Rašković and then Martić, and other behaviour. Belgrade actually largely failed to use the opportunity to exploit these rifts, and this Krajina opposition was very much created in the Krajina, not Serbia.

Martić did have a good relationship with his counterparts in the Serbian MUP/DB, wanted to co-operate with Belgrade and at times was ready to accept the 'advice' of his senior colleagues. However, he arose independently as a result of his own actions in alliance with the Knin SDS, and with the support of the Krajina public, and does not appear to have been Belgrade's puppet. I have not found any instances of Martić following instructions from the DB in 1991, and, on the contrary, there are several examples that demonstrate their lack of influence over him.

Babić's opposed Martić because he was too independent and a potential rival, rather than because of any engagement in a 'parallel structure', and their conflict primarily

(Intercept Karadžić-Milošević, 9/10/1991).

⁸⁰ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2364.E (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 9/12/1991), pp.1, 30.

⁸¹ ICTY-Perišić: E-P00165.E (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 12/12/1991), pp.84-7.

⁸² Borisav Jović, *op. cit.*, pp.384-5. ICTY-Milošević: E-D333.2e (SFRJ Presidency minutes, 3/1/1992). 'Serbian Krajina Communal Presidents Denounce Babić', *Belgrade RTB Television Network*, 4/2/1991, in FBIS-EEU-92-024, 5/2/1991.

related to Babić's attempts to remove Martić. Martić persisted because he had his own power base in the police, as well as the support of many other politicians in Krajina, and much of the public. Eventually, in late 1991, this opposition block in the Krajina did attempt to align with Belgrade against Babić, but it was not created by the DB, and, rather, evidence suggests a distinct lack of co-ordination between them and Belgrade.

7.2. Golubić, 'Frenki' and 'Captain Dragan'

In April-May 1991 a training camp was founded in Golubić, Knin, and, around the same time, the Serbian DB began a permanent mission to the Krajina, led by Franko “Frenki” Simatović. Australian Serb émigré Dragan Vasiljković also turned up and became actively involved in Golubić, and was soon hyped by the media under his nom de guerre 'Captain Dragan'. New units were formed after training in Golubić, and from July 1991 onwards Krajina began active operations against Croatian forces around Krajina.

For the OTP in The Hague, and the makers of the influential Serbian documentary *'Jedinica'*, the above facts are all connected, and this whole story is about the Serbian DB.⁸³ Golubić is seen as, from the start, a project of the Serbian DB, rather than Krajina, designed to create its own secret fighting units: Frenki's 'Red Berets' (publicly known initially as the 'Knindže', Knin ninjas). 'Captain Dragan' was allegedly working for the DB, and he and Frenki are portrayed as being directly in charge of the Golubić camp and the units that came from there. And through this DB line, Krajina's armed forces were therefore ultimately subordinate to Milošević, who was directing the fighting from Belgrade.

A lot of evidence was adduced on this issue in The Hague. The story of Golubić, Dragan, Frenki and the 'Red Berets' is usually said to show the power and influence of the Serbian DB, and the importance of Serbia's role in orchestrating and providing the resources for conflict. In fact, this story reveals the opposite: the limited role that Serbia played, the constrained role played by the Serbian DB, and how local Krajina structures, not Belgrade, were ultimately in charge in the region.

⁸³ See OTP Briefs in Milošević, Martić and Stanišić/Simatović cases, and Filip Švarn, *'Jedinica'* (B92 & Vreme, 2003), transcript of Episode 1, accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.b92.net/specijal/jedinica-eng/1_epizoda.php.

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The Golubić Myth

Firstly, it is important to note that the training camp in Golubić was of much less significance than as portrayed by the OTP. Although it probably did contribute to greater discipline and organisation on the Krajina side, the camp only provided brief training of 2-3 weeks, was only operational for about three months, and not that many people actually went through it – the Trial Chamber in the Stanišić/Simatović case estimated between 350 and 700, the higher end of which is probably accurate.⁸⁴

The contribution of Golubić-trained units to the Serbian war effort was also relatively minor. A small, twenty man unit from Knin did play a role in spearheading the Banija operation in late July 1991, but there were reportedly 2,500 people, locals, involved in that operation.⁸⁵ When the JNA became actively involved on the Serbian side in September 1991 it far eclipsed any role played by these 'special units' from Golubić – which, in fact, were often just used for political posturing and/or engaged in crime. From early 1992 onwards many of these individuals and units were sidelined or even arrested, as Martić tended to prefer professional policemen loyal to him over these bombastic and often uncontrollable 'first fighters' (*prvoborci*).⁸⁶

Various legends and supposedly legendary figures were created in Golubić, who boasted for years to come how they had been the first to take up arms against the 'Ustaše'. But

⁸⁴ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Judgement (30/5/2013), p.485. ICTY-Milošević: E-P390.4 (Dragan comments on Red Beret veterans); E-P392.1a (Additional Statement of Dragan Vasiljković). Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁸⁵ Marina Pjevalica, 'I Will Gladly Return to Krajina', *Srpski Glas*, 23/3/1992, p.6, in FBIS-EER-92-055, 4/5/1992.

⁸⁶ For example, the units of Baklajić (discussed earlier) in Korenica, Šilt in Glina, Budisavljević in Lika, and specials in Kostajnica/Dubica. Martić favoured people such as Slobodan Vujko and Marko Dragičević, who in 1990 were attacked for their involvement in the MUP's removal of arms from SJSs, and Ilija Prijić, a professor who had been involved in the SDF in Zagreb. Miloš Vasić, 'Neither Unity Nor Law', *Vreme*, 3/8/1992, pp.18-22, in FBIS-EER-92-110, 19/8/1992. Interviews and email correspondence with RSK DB officials Dušan Orlović and Petar Ajdinovic (2009-2011). Dušan Glavaš, pp.73-9. ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Nikola Dobrijević; Josip Josipović; E-290 (Statement of Josip Josipović, Sisak SUP, 1/4/1992). Various HMDC-DR documents. Transcripts of the 'Lički Osik case' (Belgrade), p.95, available from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>. Reports on the 'Baćin case', available from: <http://www.documenta.hr>.

their significance in the conflict was minor, and the war was conducted mainly by the crusty old communist and (comparatively) Yugoslav-orientated officers of the JNA, however inconvenient this fact was for their Serbian critics.⁸⁷

Captain Dragan and the Founding of Golubić

In addition to exaggerating the significance of the Golubić camp and the units it created, the OTP seems to have placed far too much emphasis on the role of Captain Dragan, and, also, the extent of his links with the Serbian MUP/DB. Despite bombastic statements to the press and Serbian media hype about his 'Knindže', Captain Dragan never commanded Krajina's armed forces. In fact, he was not even the head of the Golubić camp, who was a local, former Croatian special forces member Dragan Karna.⁸⁸ Captain Dragan designed the training programme of Golubić and was its chief instructor, and he also helped draft the Banija operation in July 1991, as well as a few other operations Krajina conducted at that time. He himself only ever commanded one unit of about twenty men (the Knindže), however, which he led in action just twice, in Lika and Banija.⁸⁹ Dragan's training programme does not seem to have been especially different from that which locals could themselves have organised,⁹⁰ and a number of sources actually suggest that the Golubić camp had already started running in some form *prior to* the arrival of both Dragan and the DB team.⁹¹

This strongly indicates that Golubić was founded by locals, rather than Belgrade. Krajina sources explain that the founding of Golubić as a local decision taken by the Krajina leadership of Babić and Martić, after the Plitvice clashes of 31 March 1991 showed the inadequacy of Krajina forces.⁹² On 1 April 1991 Babić had ordered the

⁸⁷ Prelec makes a similar point on the 'tiny' role of DB-connected units in Bosnia compared to the Bosnian Serb military: Prelec, p.367.

⁸⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: T11310-11. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁸⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16714.

⁹⁰ See evidence cited in ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Simatović Defence Final Brief (15/2/2013), pp.23, 83.

⁹¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-031; Goran Opačić. ICTY-Martić: Witness Stevo Plejo. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

⁹² For example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses Mile Bosnić; JF-041; DST-043; Aco Drača. ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

mobilisation of the TO across Krajina and registration of volunteers for defence.⁹³ But at the time no Krajina TO existed, and it was not formed until the summer, so it seems logical that this alternative was sought in the meantime.

Dragan's engagement in this project, on the other hand, did come in large part through contacts he had established in Belgrade. Dragan had visited the Krajina previously and had ideas of training Krajina forces, and was trying to get support for this in Belgrade. He does seem to have won some support, and/or his ideas coincided with thoughts in Belgrade of creating new Serbian units through the MUP/DB.⁹⁴ Dragan established contact with Serbian Minister for Energy Nikola Šainović, and then secured a meeting at the Serbian MUP, where he met with Frenki (and possibly also Minister Bogdanović). Frenki and Dragan met twice, and then sometime in April or early May 1991 Dragan set off for Krajina, in the same car as Frenki and his deputy 'Fića'.⁹⁵

Evidence suggests that Bogdanović was impressed with Dragan's proposal and gave it his support - but also that the DB had a more cautious attitude towards him.⁹⁶ Stanišić later told Hague investigators that Bogdanović ordered that they take him to the Krajina anyway.⁹⁷ However, there was another element to this story, too: Dragan's contacts with people within the Krajina, which he had already visited twice that spring, meeting with Martić and the president of Benkovac, Zdravko Zečević.⁹⁸ Dragan testified that he didn't hear back from the Serbian DB regarding his proposals, got fed up of waiting, and then,

⁹³ ICTY-Milošević: E-P352.38 (Order of Milan Babić, 1/4/1991).

⁹⁴ As suggested by: ICTY-Milošević: E-P393 ('By God, We Shall Fight', *NIN*, 12/4/1991). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3251 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 12/4/1991)

⁹⁵ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković; E-P392a & E-P392.1a (Statements of Dragan Vasiljković). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3251 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 12/4/1991); E-P2403.E (Decision Re: Franko Simatović, 18/3/1992); E-P2487.E (Decision Re: Dragan Filipović, 18/3/1992); E-P2723.E (Decision Re: Milan Radonjić, 18/3/1992); D-117 (Knin TV report); Judgement (30/5/2013), pp.465-7. Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.464. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1540.

⁹⁶ Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.73-81. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3251 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 12/4/1991); E-183.E (Decision, MUP Serbia, 15/8/1991). Witness Aco Drača. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16473.

⁹⁷ Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.464. Also see: S.K., 'Niko ne priznanje greške', *Intervju*, 17/4/1992, pp.47-8. ICTY-Milošević: E-P643.4 (JNA OB report on Daniel Snedden, 28/8/1991); E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.98-108.

⁹⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses Goran Opačić, Aco Drača, Dejan Lučić. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

on the appeal of a Krajina DB member he had got to know, Saša Medaković, resolved to go to the Krajina anyway. Frenki initially reacted negatively - 'He said, 'You're trying to kill yourself,' probably thinking that he would... dissuade me' - but subsequently offered to travel with him.⁹⁹ This account is also supported by some contemporary comments of Dragan.¹⁰⁰ Frenki drove Dragan to Medaković's in Knin, and Medaković then brought Dragan to Golubić, where Babić, Martić and Orlović agreed to his proposals and appointed him.¹⁰¹

Although the exact nature of Dragan's relationship with the DB remains hazy, and it is clear from his removal in August 1991 (discussed later) that the DB could have some influence on him, it is also clear that he was not simply a DB agent, and had independently involved himself in these events. Until spring 1991 he was actively involved in Serbia's main opposition party, the SPO, was subject to DB surveillance in Belgrade both before and after his involvement in Krajina, and even after Golubić clashed with the DB. He subsequently founded several more camps completely independently of them.¹⁰² And although Dragan won some approval in the Serbian MUP for his proposals in April 1991, his contacts in the Krajina also played an important role in his appearance there.

This is borne out by the testimonies of both Martić and Babić. Martić has said that he did not know whether Dragan was connected to the DB, as he was not interested in that, but did consider his arrival part of Serbia's response to Babić's requests for expert assistance. Golubić was founded by Martić/Krajina, however.¹⁰³ Babić, meanwhile,

⁹⁹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16477.

¹⁰⁰ Dusko Doder, 'The 'Rambo from Knin' drills his Serb guerrillas thoroughly for war against Croatia', *The Baltimore Sun*, 8/8/1991. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D298 (Aleksandra Plaveški, 'The Captain and his Kninjas', 7/1991).

¹⁰¹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković; E-P392a & E-P392.1a (Statements of Dragan Vasiljković). ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1822. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹⁰² See testimonies and statements of Dragan Vasiljković, and, for example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P3251 (Official Note, DB Serbia, 12/4/1991); E-183.E (Decision, MUP Serbia, 15/8/1991); E-P1178 (Document related to 107th Alfa Training Centre). Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Drugi deo* (Belgrade: Srpska Radikalna Stranka, 2010), p.315. ICTY-Tolimir: E-P1416.E (Mladić Diary, 27/5/1992-31/7/1992), pp.243-72.

¹⁰³ ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić, T38125, 38149-51, 38166.

despite trying to paint Dragan as part of the DB's 'parallel structure', himself said that at the time he regarded Dragan as an SPO activist and military professional who had come to help, and it was only when he was leaving in August 1991 that he 'grasped that he was a part of the system of [the] DB of Serbia'.¹⁰⁴

The evidence thus suggests that the creation of Golubić followed local decisions by Krajina structures. Belgrade gave its support, following Babić's requests for assistance, and it was partly through his contacts in Belgrade that Dragan acquired his position in the Krajina. Dragan was not simply a DB agent, however, and his own contacts within the Krajina partly explain his appointment there. His own role in Krajina, and the role of the Golubić camp, was also considerably less than that suggested in The Hague.

The DB Mission to Krajina

Around April-May 1991 the Serbian DB began a permanent mission to the Knin Krajina, with a three member team consisting of Frenki, Dragan Filipović "Fića", and Milan Radonjić "Meda". In the ICTY Frenki was portrayed as the commander and creator of the Golubić camp and the units that came from it, particularly the Knindže, and of the whole 'parallel structure': Martić, Dragan, etcetera. The evidence presented at The Hague, and elsewhere, including from the OTP's own 'insider' witnesses, however, suggests a more nuanced picture.

It appears that Frenki came to the Krajina with a broadly defined mission and may have independently involved himself in certain matters. Dragan has recalled that Frenki was campaigning within the MUP for a certain approach to be taken, supporting Serbian special units, and looking for ways to get involved personally: 'it seemed that Frenki was trying to see how he could get involved in the Krajina... I would ask Frenki for support and he would tell me that it just was not possible to do it officially'.¹⁰⁵ Frenki's

¹⁰⁴ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.18 (Babić Interview), pp.48-51. ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1540-1.

¹⁰⁵ ICTY-Milošević: E-P392a & E-P392.1a (Statements of Dragan Vasiljković). And: Filip Švarn, 'Jedinica' (B92 & Vreme, 2003), transcript of Episode 1, accessed 1/8/2014 from:

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deputy Fića, meanwhile, has described how they were given a very broad mandate, primarily relating to gathering intelligence, and autonomy to do this as they saw fit, with few direct instructions from Belgrade.¹⁰⁶

At least part of the purpose of the DB's mission was to provide Belgrade with intelligence on what was going on in the region.¹⁰⁷ Frenki also served, as one contemporary source describes him, as 'the chief representative of the Serbian MUP' in Knin, co-ordinating assistance from the Serbian state.¹⁰⁸ Babić and Martić also seem to have understood the DB's mission at least partly as the expert assistance to the Krajina SUP which Babić had requested from Milošević (and which Bogdanović recalled having provided).¹⁰⁹ And, indeed, upon their arrival Frenki and Fića de-bugged Krajina offices and buildings, something which the Krajina DB did not have the expertise to do, while Fića provided training for several Krajina DB operatives.¹¹⁰

To assist in intelligence, Frenki was sent the daily reports of the Krajina MUP, DB and TO (as were Babić, Martić, and other leading personnel).¹¹¹ Krajina DB chief Orlović maintains that they wanted to inform Serbia of what (in their view) was happening, and claims that the Serbian DB men were actually dependent on Krajina's collaboration and assistance.¹¹² Fića's account supports this, as he describes how, initially, he could do nothing in the region, stonewalled by suspicious locals until Orlović assisted him.¹¹³

http://www.b92.net/specijal/jedinica-eng/1_epizoda.php.

¹⁰⁶ Filipović, pp.48-57.

¹⁰⁷ Filipović, pp.48-9.

¹⁰⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2615 (Statement of Milenko Sučević, 7/5/1992); Witness JF-039. ICTY-Martić: E-499 (Report by Frenki, 28/7/1991).

¹⁰⁹ Svetislav Spasojević, 'The Man Who Disappeared', *NIN*, 18/12/1992, pp.18-21, in FBIS-EEU-93-010, 15/1/1993. ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P404 (Interview with Radmilo Bogdanović, *Duga*, 12/2/1993).

¹¹⁰ Filipović, p.49. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Milan Babić. ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003. Also: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2615 (Statement of Milenko Sučević, 7/5/1992)

¹¹¹ Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). This in itself suggests Babić's consent to his mission at the time, as it was he who was establishing the Krajina TO.

¹¹² Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹¹³ Filipović, p.50.

Contradictory evidence was given in The Hague on the precise role of Frenki in Golubić. Frenki was not at the meeting in Golubić where Dragan was appointed, but Babić claimed that a month or so later Frenki gave him a tour of the camp, as a 'host and the person in charge... the boss.'¹¹⁴ MM-003 also claimed that Frenki oversaw the camp and was involved in selecting personnel, promotions, and so forth. Prosecution witness JF-031, one of the first commanders at Golubić, however, maintained that Frenki and the Serbian DB had no role there at the time, and he did not even see or hear of Frenki until June or July 1991, though he could have been involved in the decision to create the camp.¹¹⁵ (And a number of Stanišić/Simatović defence witnesses, of course, denied that Frenki was involved.) JF-031 and MM-003, as well as few contemporary documents, do suggest that Frenki had some involvement in the overall command structure in Krajina in June/July 1991, along with Martić and Dragan.¹¹⁶ However, MM-003 was clear that Frenki was beneath Martić in this structure, and claimed that Martić began to get annoyed with Frenki's attempts to increase his influence. JF-031 also testified that Frenki came below Martić, though they would usually agree on matters prior to meetings.

On 8 June 1991 Martić organised a demonstrative march of all the troops from Golubić¹¹⁷ to neighbouring Drvar in Bosnia, much to the ire of Karadžić and Milošević.¹¹⁸ This suggests either Frenki's lack of authority over/involvement with Martić and Golubić, or an absence of close co-ordination between Frenki and Belgrade, or, most probably, a mixture of the two.

In addition, contrary to OTP's portrayal of the situation in The Hague, there does not actually seem to have been a unified system of command across Krajina at the time. Only one or two special units from Golubić, consisting of a few dozen men, appear to

¹¹⁴ ICTY-Krajišnik: Witness Milan Babić, T3378.

¹¹⁵ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-039, JF-031.

¹¹⁶ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P979 (Order by Frenki, 16/6/1991); E-P1179 (Report from Daniel Snedden to DB); E-P2673 (Armoured Vehicles project, 21/6/1991). ICTY-Martić: E-622 (Agreement on Further Work, Golubić, 14/6/1991).

¹¹⁷ ICTY-Martić: Witness MM-003, T2196.

¹¹⁸ Domovina Intercept: B6549 (Karadžić-Milošević, 11/6/1991).

have been under the direct command of Knin, with most who trained there usually returning to local command structures in their own areas.¹¹⁹ Municipal and party leaderships had a strong influence on the DB, police, special forces and territorial defence in each municipality, and in many respects they were only loosely associated/co-ordinating with Knin. This was particularly the case for the territorial defence, which was only being formed on the level of Krajina that July, and the region of Banija-Kordun, whose police did not even formally join the Krajina SUP until June-July 1991. There were a few direct actions from Golubić that summer, but also plenty of other fighting erupting at the time, with local defence units and territorial defence.¹²⁰ Thus, even Martić and Babić were not directing all the fighting in the region, let alone Frenki or Dragan.

MM-003 and Babić also describe how Frenki involved himself with the construction of an armoured train in Knin, to be used in fighting, and a document on this project dated 21 June 1991 is indeed signed by Frenki.¹²¹ This in itself indicates that Frenki was involving himself in pet projects, rather than having a precise role determined by Belgrade, as it is difficult to see why Belgrade would have viewed this as a priority. Numerous sources, including Babić himself, also confirm that this train was commanded by a local (Blagoje Guška) and constructed with local resources, with Babić actually describing how Frenki pestered him with requests to assign resources for its construction.¹²² And in the end only one train was built, rather than the three envisaged in the document. All this indicates Frenki's lack of resources and subordinate position in Krajina structures.

¹¹⁹ See, for example: ICTY-Milošević: E-P392a & E-P392.1a (Statements of Dragan Vasiljković). ICTY-Martić: E-568 (Report on the work of Dvor Special Unit, 18/6/1991-7/4/1992); E-600 (Requests to give legitimate status to Special Unit Kostajnica, 30/9/1991).

¹²⁰ For example, see: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D109 (Report on Benkovac TO, 25/11/1991), and SAOK TO daily reports in Stanišić/Simatović case and HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 1*.

¹²¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2673 (Armoured Vehicles project, 21/6/1991).

¹²² ICTY-Martić: Witness Milan Babić, T1545. ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.18 (Babić Interview), pp.25-6. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1161 (Politika, 19/9/1991); E-D299 (Report of the Association of Serbs from Croatia, 8/8/1991).

Golubić and the Red Berets

In The Hague, the OTP argued that the formation of the Golubić camp in spring 1991 was the result of a decision by the Serbian MUP to secretly form special fighting units of the Serbian DB, later known as the 'Red Berets'.¹²³ A key piece of evidence for this is a ceremony held by the 'Red Berets' in their camp in Kula, Serbia, in 1997. Before Milošević and others Frenki gave a speech about the history of the unit, dating its formation to 4 May 1991. Milošević greeted its veterans, and various awards were given, including to Captain Dragan.¹²⁴

The 1997 ceremony gives a very misleading impression of the unit, however. Part of the purpose of this event was to impress Milošević at a time when his relationship with Stanišić and the DB was poor, and Frenki's speech greatly exaggerated the contribution of the 'Red Berets' to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.¹²⁵ Frenki said, for example, that from October 1991 'the unit provided important support in the liberation of all areas of the Republic of Serbian Krajina', with 'around 5,000 soldiers' being co-ordinated by the unit command.¹²⁶ The OTP's own case at the ICTY, however, was that at that stage the core of 'the unit' consisted of just 20-30 people in a camp in Serbia, who ventured to the front just once, at the request of the JNA. There were a few other units that were connected with the Serbian DB at the time, such as Baklajić's unit in Korenica, but their numbers and roles were similarly small. Nor is Dragan's attendance at the ceremony proof that he was a DB agent, as the ceremony was attended by numerous people who had nothing to do with the 'Red Berets', including leading figures from the former JNA

¹²³ See, for example, OTP Final Briefs in Stanišić/Simatović and Martić cases, and Babić plea agreement.

¹²⁴ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P61.E (Kula Camp Video, 1997), p.10; E-P1075 (VJ report on DB paramilitaries).

¹²⁵ The effort does not seem to have succeeded, as the 'Red Berets' were subsequently greatly cut back in size, and Frenki's role in the unit partly severed. ICTY-Milošević: Witness Radomir Marković, T8698. Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.536.

¹²⁶ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P61.E (Kula Camp Video, 1997), p.10.

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who had opposed them.¹²⁷ If they had managed to arrive slightly earlier, a group of people who had left the unit in 1992 would even have been included.¹²⁸

The mythology of 'the unit' traced it back to the Knindže, where its members all started out and first became acquainted. But the idea that Golubić was about forming the 'Red Berets' really makes little sense. Serbia allegedly formed this unit in Krajina, creating it mainly of people from that region, in order to hide its links to this top secret unit. But Krajina was an area heavily exposed to both Croatian and JNA intelligence, and Golubić was never a secret - from its very opening it was heavily publicised to boost Krajina morale.¹²⁹ When Frenki took over the unit from Dragan in autumn 1991 it was precisely to Serbia that he took them, establishing a camp in Vojvodina which was, unsurprisingly, not publicly announced.¹³⁰ To entrust such a top secret project to a former émigré and opposition activist who was subject to DB surveillance (Captain Dragan), after meeting him just one or two times, would also, frankly, be rather bizarre.

When Captain Dragan left the Krajina in August 1991, he told his Knindže to follow Frenki, as the only person there whom he trusted. The unit was then partially disbanded, as its members were angry with Babić and unwilling to serve him.¹³¹ Frenki subsequently took twenty or thirty of these men to Korenica, and then Serbia. Frenki had obviously got to know these men in this period, but it seems that they only became the 'Red Berets' after their time in Knin. Key Prosecution witness JF-031, a founding member of the 'Red Berets', was adamant on this fact, as was Dragan.¹³² Moreover, although continuity of 'the unit' was always claimed from the Knindže to the 'Red Berets', its composition in fact changed significantly. None of the commanding personnel of the Golubić camp appear to have had a future in the Serbian DB, for

¹²⁷ For example: Aleksandar Vasiljević, Petar Gračanin who was involved in the arrest of the Red Berets in Brčko in 1992, etcetera. ICTY-Milošević: E-P390.5.

¹²⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness JF-031.

¹²⁹ Degoricija p.87. Srđan Radulović, 'Poslednje smotre', *NIN*, 5/7/1991, pp.26-7.

¹³⁰ See testimonies and statements of Dragan Vasiljković, and JF-031.

¹³¹ See testimonies and statements of Dragan Vasiljković, and JF-031, and: Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.135-6. Marina Pjevalica, 'I Will Gladly Return to Krajina', *Srpski Glas*, 23/3/1992, p.6, in FBIS-EER-92-055, 4/5/1992. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1070.

¹³² Also: ICTY-Karadžić: Witness Milan Martić, T38161-2.

example,¹³³ and of the three key leaders of Frenki's unit, only one had been a leading man in the Knindže.¹³⁴

In summary, Frenki had a somewhat ambiguous and multi-faceted role in Krajina in 1991: providing intelligence to Belgrade, supporting the training and formation of Krajina special units, co-ordinating assistance, and probably having some influence on command structures, as well as involving himself in projects such as the armoured train. Rather than a concrete decision in Belgrade to form a special unit of the Serbian DB under Frenki in spring 1991, it seems there was a decision to support the training of the Krajina police and their formation of special units. There may also have been thinking about forming a unit of the DB, which Frenki probably advocated – Dragan recalls that 'Frenki had the idea to form the [DB's Red Berets]' and 'lobbied for a long time and fought to get permission for it' - but this did not come to fruition until later, after Frenki's time in Knin.¹³⁵

The Expulsion of Dragan and Frenki

In early August 1991 both Dragan and Frenki were removed from the Krajina after clashing with Babić. Both then lost whatever functions they had had, and Frenki would thereafter only occasionally visit the region rather than being permanently based there. Although it was partly via Belgrade that the two were removed, these events clearly show that the local Krajina authorities were more powerful than Frenki and Dragan at the time.

The conflicts that led to Dragan and Frenki's expulsion erupted mainly on the Babić-Dragan axis, and do not seem to have concerned, for example, attacks on Croats. In fact, at the end of July 1991 the first significant mass crime took place against Croats in

¹³³ ICTY-Martić: E-622 (Agreement on Further Work, Golubić, 14/6/1991).

¹³⁴ ICTY-Milošević: E-P390.4 (Dragan comments on Red Beret veterans).

¹³⁵ Filip Švarn, 'Jedinica' (B92 & Vreme, 2003), transcript of Episode 1, accessed 1/8/2014 from: http://www.b92.net/specijal/jedinica-eng/1_epizoda.php.

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Krajina – the murder of a number of Croat civilians in Dvor – and Dragan and his Knindže arrested the suspected perpetrators. This seems to have been controversial in Dvor. Martić subsequently had them released on the grounds that Dragan had not had the authority to arrest them, though no investigation seems to have followed. Several sources confirm that Dragan considered this a major mistake. It is unclear what role, if any, Babić had in this, but at the time of his departure from Krajina Dragan gave this as one of the reasons he and Babić had fallen out. (The Serb commander in Dvor, Bogdan Vajagić, had also been forced into resigning by the criminals; in The Hague Babić identified him as the chief exponent of the 'parallel structure' in the region.)¹³⁶

Aside from this, Dragan and Babić's disagreements arose over fairly minor matters connected to power and control. Dragan was an independent figure and acquiring a popular profile, not something that Babić would be happy about, and had begun to display increasing insubordination towards Babić. Already in June 1991 there was an incident where the JNA demanded Dragan stop field training in a certain area. Babić assented, but Dragan openly argued with Babić and refused his orders. After the Banija operation Dragan then gave a speech in Knin that was openly critical of Babić and the SDS.¹³⁷ Babić also explained that a key trigger for their conflict was when Dragan diverted some arms that Babić had arranged to be delivered to his own men.¹³⁸ Dragan next found that Babić had replaced his soldiers in Knin fortress and banned entry to him; Dragan ordered them to leave.¹³⁹ Babić subsequently made it clear that Dragan had to go, accusing him of a coup and trying to take over the territorial defence.¹⁴⁰ Dragan left, and, with the Golubić camp shutting down, advised his Knindže to follow Frenki. It was then, Babić says, that he realised Frenki and Dragan were in this together, and he

¹³⁶ See testimony and statements of Dragan Vasiljković, and ICTY-Martić: Witness Van Lynden; E-P587-8 (Reports on Dvor operation, 26-28/7/1991). Dan Stets, 'Mysterious Figure Is Serbia's Top Hero 'Captain Dragan': Fighter, Humanitarian.', *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19/6/1993. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18/8/1991.

¹³⁷ ICTY-Martić: E-590 (Captain Dragan Speech, 31/7/1991). ICTY-Babić: Defence Motion Annex 2 (Witness Statements, p.20. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses Aco Drača; Mile Bosnić. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹³⁸ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16599-600.

¹³⁹ Testimonies of Babić, Dragan, DST-043, and Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹⁴⁰ HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 2*, p.206.

also seems to have felt threatened by those men, who were angry with him for disbanding Golubić and expelling Dragan. Babić phoned Milošević and demanded that he withdraw Frenki from the Krajina; Frenki, too, then left.¹⁴¹ As noted, Martić was also apparently not unhappy to see Dragan and Frenki leave.

In early August 1991 Stanišić came to Knin in connection with the conflicts then erupting between Krajina officials, and Babić recalls him trying to smooth relations between him and Martić.¹⁴² (According to Fića, Milošević emphasised the absolute priority of preventing Serb-Serb clashes.)¹⁴³ Dragan later testified that Frenki told him to go to Belgrade to meet Stanišić, who banned him from returning to Krajina. Stanišić also told Hague investigators that he had gone to Knin to withdraw Dragan.¹⁴⁴

Numerous sources, however, indicate that the principal reasons for Dragan's departure were local, concerning his clashes with Babić, something the DB thus merely relayed to Dragan.¹⁴⁵ Dragan had also already announced he was leaving Krajina before receiving this ban in Belgrade – a ban which he did not entirely respect, either, briefly visiting the region again in November (to Babić's consternation), and returning more permanently in 1993. Thus, although the DB was involved in Dragan's departure from Krajina, it was above all thanks to his conflict with locals, in particular Babić, that he (and then Frenki) was pushed out.¹⁴⁶

After Frenki's removal the Serbian DB did still have a presence in Korenica, and a camp was set up there as Golubić was closing, in co-operation with Korenica SO president

¹⁴¹ Babić interviews and testimonies. Supported by: ICTY-Stanišić: Witness DST-043, T12949-50. ICTY-Babić: Defence Motion Annex 2 (Witness Statements), p.2.

¹⁴² Babić interviews and testimonies. And: Domovina Intercept: B6636 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 7/8/1991). ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dragan Vasiljković, T16501.

¹⁴³ Filipović, p.57.

¹⁴⁴ Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.475.

¹⁴⁵ For example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness JF-039; Aco Drača; Mile Bosnić; DST-043; E-P1062 (JNA OB report, information on Daniel Snedden, 28/8/1991). Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.135-6. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009). ICTY-Babić: Defence Motion Annex 2 (Witness Statements), pp.18-20. Filip Švarn et al, 'Put bez povratka, *Vreme*, 18/10/2001. Srđan Radulović, 'Peacemakers' in Camouflage Uniforms', *NIN*, 16/8/1991, pp.14-15 in FBIS-EEU-91-133, 6/9/1991. Some external factors can be found in: ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), pp.98-108. Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.475.

¹⁴⁶ Babić interviews and testimonies, and ICTY-Milošević: E-P392a & E-P392.1a (Statements of Dragan Vasiljković).

Boško Božanić, who was opposed to Babić and appears to have had a good relationship with the Serbian DB. According to Babić, Milošević later in August asked him to allow Frenki to return to Krajina, and Babić relented. Frenki appears to have only occasionally visited thereafter, however, and was no longer permanently based in the region.¹⁴⁷

The expulsion of Dragan and Frenki from the Krajina showed that the Krajina structures, Babić and Martić, were decisive in the region. Whatever influence Dragan and Frenki had briefly had largely ended then.¹⁴⁸ This is not to say, however, that Belgrade thereafter had no influence over Krajina Serb forces. From August 1991 onwards the SFRJ Presidency organised a number of ceasefires in Croatia, which Krajina officials usually assented to and declared they were implementing (sometimes after demands from Belgrade).¹⁴⁹ Several Karadžić phone intercepts also shed light on these relationships. In early September Milošević and the JNA strongly supported a ceasefire due to the coming Hague peace conference, and on 6 September Milošević expressed his exasperation to Karadžić at controlling radicals: 'They're working all the time. I've just checked. The 7th Banija [Division] wants to attack Kostajnica, so I told them: "Fuck off. Tomorrow's a peace conference and you're attacking Kostajnica."... we have to enforce discipline.'¹⁵⁰ The attack on Kostajnica does indeed appear to have been postponed by a few days, by which point Milošević may have endorsed it – on 10 September he discussed with Karadžić how there were 'very good results' there.¹⁵¹ Some willingness to listen to Belgrade on a tactical ceasefire, however, is a far cry from everything being closely directed from Serbia. An intercept in mid-October 1991 also points to Krajina forces' autonomy from Serbia, as Karadžić, talking about Babić with an associate, noted how 'he sets his mind and won't listen... They stopped a train full of

¹⁴⁷ ICTY-Martić: Witnesses Milan Babić; MM-003; E-565 (Statement of Nedeljko Orlić, 1993). ICTY-Stanišić-Simatović: JF-031. Filipović confirms he was present in Korenica to the end of 1991, and Orlović confirms that this camp was set up with Božanić: Filipović, p.57. Interview Dušan Orlović (Belgrade: 7/2009).

¹⁴⁸ Though Frenki would return, in a different capacity, in 1994-95.

¹⁴⁹ For example: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D366 (MoD Serbia, Order, 18/9/1991).

¹⁵⁰ Domovina Intercept: B6672/B6959 (Karadžić-Milošević, 6/9/1991).

¹⁵¹ Domovina Intercept: C2536 (Karadžić-Milošević, 10/9/1991). Adžić, on the other hand, opposed the attack on Kostajnica and considered its perpetrators people 'who listen to no-one'. Perhaps Milošević and the JNA differed here. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1513 (Mladić-Adžić recording, 13/9/1991).

women and children. I beg him, Milošević is asking me to beg him, to let the train go. You remember the incident.'¹⁵² It would, clearly, be absurd for Milošević to ask Karadžić to beg Babić to get Krajina forces to release this train, if those forces were in fact controlled by Milošević's 'parallel structure', over which Babić had no influence.

Thus, although evidence varies on the precise extent to which Frenki had influence in the Krajina, and to which Dragan was associated with the Serbian DB, it seems clear, particularly from their expulsion in August 1991, that Martić and Babić were always more powerful. The influence and significance of Dragan and Frenki has been in many respects exaggerated in The Hague, as has the significance of the Golubić camp, which seems to have been as much, if not more, a local decision and project as one decided on in Serbia. Far from showing the power of the Serbian DB and a 'parallel structure', these escapades in fact reveal the limited role of the Serbian DB, and that Babić and Martić were ultimately in charge in the Krajina. Belgrade may have been able to pressure the Krajina Serbs to agree to a temporary ceasefire, but Milošević or the DB were not controlling or directing Krajina Serb forces as is often alleged.

¹⁵² ICTY-Krajišnik: E-P154.15.A.1 (Intercept Karadžić-Vukić-Grahovac-Sendić, 16/10/1991).

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7.3. Conclusions

In 1991 Serbia had greater, and more direct, influence on the security/defence apparatus in the Krajina than on its politics. Martić was more willing to listen to and collaborate with Belgrade than Babić, and Serbian DB agent Frenki had some traction in the security sector in the region that summer.

The extent of Serbia's influence has, however, been exaggerated. The Serbian DB was not directing the fighting in the region, in summer 1991 or later, and Frenki's role was largely eliminated when Babić demanded his removal that August. 'Captain Dragan' was also removed following local demands, and his own influence prior to that, as well as his connections with the Serbian DB, have been overstated in The Hague. Martić himself was not a creation of Serbia/the DB, but rose to prominence locally, had his own power base and conducted his politics independently, actually clashing with Belgrade even in 1991. His clashes with Babić in 1991, meanwhile, seem to have simply been a power struggle, rather than about Martić's engagement in any 'parallel structure' attacking Croats.

This is not to say that Serbia had no influence at all. It was capable of, for example, persuading the Krajina Serbs to accept tactical ceasefires. By late 1991 the opposition to Babić within Krajina was apparently also jostling for Belgrade's support, and in January 1992 Martić was the first to convert to accepting the Vance plan as Belgrade demanded. But this is far from the image of Milošević directing everything going on in the region, via a 'parallel structure' or some other means. If we want to understand developments in the security/defence sphere in Krajina in 1990-91, we should, again, look above all at Krajina and Croatia, decisions taken in Knin by Babić and Martić, and the interplay between the actions of Krajina and Croatia.

Chapter 8: Eastern Slavonia

In 1991 there were three Serbian autonomous regions (*Srpske autonomne oblasti*, SAOs) that would go on to unite and form the RSK: Krajina, Western Slavonia and Eastern Slavonia. It is natural to focus on developments in the Krajina, the main Serb-populated region within Croatia, because it was here that the Serbian rebellion began and most of the key Serbian leaders of the time came from. Western Slavonia, by contrast, was mostly occupied by Croatian forces already in 1991 and would not play a particularly significant role in RSK politics. But what about Eastern Slavonia, the other key region of the RSK? As we shall see, the situation there differed substantially from that in Krajina – here, in fact, the available evidence largely supports the conclusion that local Serbs fell under the decisive influence or control of Serbia, particularly in the security sector.

Slavonia is a large region encompassing most of northern Croatia, which in its east borders Vojvodina/Serbia. The eastern-most municipalities of Slavonia contained a considerable Serbian population in 1991, but the region was very mixed, with little contiguous 'Serb' territory, and predominantly Croat or other nationality (mostly Hungarian) villages inbetween the predominantly Serb ones. None of the municipalities in the region had an absolute or even relative Serbian majority, and in the whole Eastern Slavonia region that was occupied by Serbian forces in 1991 only 34.9% of the population was Serbian, Croats forming a relative majority (44.5%) of the population.¹

In Slavonia the SKH had strong roots and the SDS had not even formed there by the time of the 1990 elections.² It was only gradually, over the course of the following year, that more and more Serbs affiliated with the SDS. Even in spring 1991 there were still

¹ Data from: Dražen Živić, 'Basic Demographic Characteristics of the Displaced Population from the Croatian East', *Društvena istraživanja*, Vol.6, No.28-29 (Zagreb: 1997), pp.195-216. Kubo, 'The Radicalisation and Ethnicization of Elections'. M. Cherif Bassiouni, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts*, established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (27/5/1994).

² Interview Vojislav Vukčević (Belgrade: 2007). Miškulin, 'Stranka ugroženog naroda...', p.23.

many former SKH Serb representatives active in the region, espousing more moderate stances and trying to avoid inter-ethnic conflict, while, as discussed in Chapter 2, the SDS in Eastern Slavonia was also much more moderately inclined than in Krajina, and affiliated with Rašković rather than Babić.³

A key reason for the SDS's relative moderation in the region was the fact that Serbs there were in the minority, and lacked their own rebel region (though this, of course, was also a consequence of their moderation). Lacking a majority in any single municipality, it was not easy to form a base of resistance, rebellion and secession, as had been done in the Krajina, while the way in which the predominantly Serb settlements were dotted around and non-contiguous meant that until war operations began in August 1991 there was no real Serbian territory as such, just different villages with their own armed guards and other forces, with rival Croatian villages and forces inbetween. Thanks to the twin factors of relative moderation and lack of a municipal majority, when Serbia got more involved in Croatia, in spring, summer and autumn 1991, everything – political structures, military structures, the police – was much less established in Eastern Slavonia than in SAOK, and this led to Serbian officials occupying a much more significant and decisive role in the region. The proximity of Eastern Slavonia to Serbia also played a role in this.

³ ICTY-Dokmanović: Witness Milenko Milinković. ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Veljko Džakula, Vojislav Vukčević, Goran Hadžić, Borivoje Savić.

8.1. The Political Leadership of Eastern Slavonia: Goran Hadžić

The key political leader of Eastern Slavonia in 1991 was Goran Hadžić. Hadžić had been a member of the SKH and in spring 1990 was elected to Vukovar SO on their list. He subsequently joined the SDS, however, and was elected founding president of its Vukovar branch in June 1990, as well as being a vice-president of the SDS's regional board for Slavonia, formed later that year.⁴ In January 1991 an SNV of Slavonia was formed, and he was its main local leader, formally becoming its president in March 1991.⁵ At the end of June 1991 a Grand National Assembly of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem (*Slavonija, Baranja i Zapadni Srem*, SBZS) was convened, consisting of Serb representatives from communes throughout the region, and Hadžić was nominated to form a government of the autonomous region (SAO-SBZS). From February 1992 to the end of 1993, he went on to be President of the RSK.

There is some evidence that Hadžić had already become popular in the Vukovar region in the second half of 1990,⁶ while a number of sources attribute his wider fame and popularity to events in early April 1991, when he was arrested and beaten by Croatian police, and some Serbian villages in Eastern Slavonia threw up barricades demanding his release.⁷ Initially, he held relatively moderate stances, and was firmly on Rašković's side in his clashes with Babić. At the 30 March 1991 meeting of the SDS in Obrovac, for example, he favoured a conciliatory approach and opening negotiations with Zagreb, and he had attended talks with Tuđman earlier that month.⁸ At the time he also had contact with Degoricija and Boljkovac of the Croatian MUP, who even went so far as to consider him their 'agent'.⁹ Hadžić was also involved in the radical SNV of Slavonia,

⁴ ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103465-6.

⁵ Petrović, pp.61-2. Hadžić claims this was later: ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T10084.

⁶ ICTY-Babić: E-PS7.2.21 (Babić Interview), pp.38-9.

⁷ For example: ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović), p.3. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T9386.

⁸ ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Veljko Džakula, Vojislav Vukčević, Goran Hadžić, Borivoje Savić; T9443. Interview Veljko Džakula (Zagreb: 30/9/2009).

⁹ Boljkovac, p.235. Degoricija, pp.212, 301. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić.

however, and although moderate with regard to negotiations, he still seems to have been in favour of Serbian self-determination in the event of Croatian independence.¹⁰

Some sources suggest that Hadžić became more radical after his April 1991 beating, though he apparently still had contact with the Croatian MUP until Boljkovac was replaced in July 1991.¹¹ By the summer he certainly favoured territorial self-determination, and achieving that by military means. It seems likely that there was a certain amount of opportunism on Hadžić's part - former colleagues of his recall that he 'was not a serious person' and was 'mostly concerned with himself and his own way of life'¹² and chasing women,¹³ and as President of the RSK he spent most of his time in Novi Sad, Vojvodina. He was, most likely, keeping his options open in this period, and then chose to fully embrace the hardline/war option when events moved in that direction.

Hadžić and Milošević

As RSK President from February 1992 onwards, Hadžić appears to have been close to Milošević and more willing to follow his lead than Krajina officials like Martić. He was also more co-operative with Belgrade than Babić in late 1991 and early 1992, though, like Babić, he initially rejected the Vance plan. Whether or not Hadžić was close with Milošević or co-ordinating with him in 1991 remains unclear, however, as evidence varies considerably.

At The Hague the OTP brought two witnesses who testified to a close connection between Hadžić and Milošević already throughout 1991; both, however, have credibility issues, and other evidence supports Hadžić's claim that he only came into contact with

¹⁰ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T10089. And: T9443.

¹¹ ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103466. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić, T10089. Marko Dejanović, 'Špijun koji nas je mrzio', accessed 1/11/2011 from: <http://markodejanovic.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/Hadžić2.pdf>.

¹² ICTY-Milošević: Witness C-037 (Veljko Džakula), T103466.

¹³ Interview Slobodan Jarčević, RSK Foreign Minister 1992-94 (Belgrade: 2011).

Milošević towards the end of the year. The rather confused and confusing witness Borislav Bogunović, who served as SAO-SBZS Interior Minister in 1991, said that Hadžić reported having met with Milošević probably five or six times between January and August 1991, taking instructions from him on what to do in the region. But Bogunović also referred to the first meeting as concerning the formation of the government, which would place it in May at the very earliest.¹⁴ Witness Borivoje Savić, secretary of the Vukovar SDS in 1990-91, meanwhile, claimed that Hadžić's first meeting with Milošević was in January 1991, and that they drew close from May 1991 onwards. However, Savić was a highly problematic witness,¹⁵ and both he and Bogunović themselves cast doubt on their own claims of Hadžić's contacts with Milošević, noting that this was only what Hadžić had said at the time and that they did not necessarily believe he had really met Milošević.¹⁶ Others suggest that Hadžić grew close to Milošević after his arrest in April 1991.¹⁷ A number of sources also suggest that Hadžić had contact with figures from the Serbian MUP/DB by mid-1991 at the latest.¹⁸

Hadžić himself, on the other hand, has claimed that his first contact with Milošević was around 7 September 1991, when Milošević phoned to persuade him to sign a ceasefire (he had seen him previously at a large meeting of Croatian Serbs with Milosevic that spring, but they had not spoken). Various meetings with Milošević and other Serbian officials then followed, mostly in large groups, in relation to international negotiations and the Vance plan.¹⁹ Some evidence independently supports Hadžić's testimony. For

¹⁴ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Borislav Bogunović; E-553-4 (Witness Statements of Borislav Bogunović)

¹⁵ Many aspects of Savić's accounts were highly dubious. An interview he gave after his first testimony, which contains numerous fantastic claims, casts further doubt on his credibility: 'Hadžić je radio za tajne službe i ono što mu je govorio Milošević', *Večernji list*, 2/4/2013.

¹⁶ ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Borivoje Savić; Borislav Bogunović.

¹⁷ ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović), pp.3, 11. On Hadžić-Milošević links see also: 'Lovas Case', Witness Aleksandar Vasiljević (Belgrade: 21/6/2010), accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/Transkripti/lovas.html>, pp.12, 24. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Volume 2: Annexes 1-41', 20/12/2010, Annex 8 (Witness Statement of Ž. Č.), p.41.

¹⁸ Željko Peratović, 'Milošević je 1991. nadzirao pripreme Srba za pobunu u Hrvatskoj', *Vjesnik*, 13/10/2001, p.3. Karan, p.95. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses Nebojša Bogunović; Borislav Bogunović.

¹⁹ ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić.

example, prosecution witness Gajić-Glišić, then secretary to Serbia's Ministry of Defence, testified that Milošević was completely unfamiliar with Hadžić, enquiring about who he was when he was already off to The Hague for negotiations in October 1991.²⁰ Gajić-Glišić's recollection is at least slightly off, as Hadžić himself confirms that the two had spoken in September.²¹ An intercepted conversation on 8 October 1991 does indicate that Milošević was not very familiar with Hadžić, however: he refers to him as 'this man Hadžić' and 'this Hadžić', possibly even calling him 'Tadić' in error.²²

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusion on when Hadžić came into contact with Milošević in 1991, the extent to which they were co-ordinating, and whether this had a role in confirming Hadžić's leading position in the Eastern Slavonia region.²³ We can, however, certainly conclude that Hadžić was not simply 'created' by Milošević, as he was already an important regional figure in January 1991, before there are any suggestions of them being in contact. He was also obviously independent at first, supporting Rašković in spring 1991 despite Belgrade's evident preference for Babić. In an April 1991 meeting with American ambassador Warren Zimmerman, a Slavonian SDS delegation consisting of Hadžić, Džakula and Sasić even 'stressed that they do not take orders or instructions from Belgrade and... clearly implied that Babić and the Krajina Serbs do', as well as indicating 'some fear that their interests would be sold out in a Milošević/Tuđman deal.'²⁴

In his interactions with Milošević from September 1991 to early 1992, meanwhile, Hadžić displayed his independence, but also much greater willingness than Babić to listen to Milošević. Hadžić had not wanted to agree to the ceasefire on 7 September

²⁰ ICTY-Milošević: Witness Dobrila Gajić-Glišić, T27912-3.

²¹ Also: Željko Peratović, 'Milošević je 1991. nadzirao pripreme Srba za pobunu u Hrvatskoj', *Vjesnik*, 13/10/2001, p.3. Avramov, p.272.

²² Domovina Intercept: C2370 (Karadžić-Milošević, 8/10/1991).

²³ Several sources indicate that retired general Radojica Nenežić, a Croatian Serb from the region then living in Belgrade, believed that he played a major role in promoting Hadžić as leader of the region, which he later regretted - but his interpretation may not have been valid. ICTY-Milošević: E-P568.9a (*The Serbian Army*, Dobrila Gajić-Glišić), p.108. ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Borivoje Savić, Goran Hadžić. Karan, p.100.

²⁴ ICTY-Hadžić: T9445.

1991, for example, but agreed when Milošević persuaded him over the phone. In October 1991 he was much more amenable than Babić to Milošević's idea of 'special status' and co-operative approach to negotiations, though Milošević still had some problems with him – on two occasions when Babić refused to attend international talks, for example, Hadžić then joined suit.²⁵ In October 1991 Eastern Slavonia also declared unification with Bosnian Krajina, and Hadžić and his colleagues did completely reject the Vance plan at first, with Hadžić being openly critical of the 'poor foreign policy of Serbia'.²⁶ It was only in late January 1992, when Hadžić received some additional guarantees from UN negotiator Marrack Goulding that the plan was indeed status neutral, and references to 'Croatia' purely geographic, that he accepted it.²⁷

When the SAOs united into the RSK and Babić was removed in spring 1992, Hadžić was elected RSK President. His former colleagues indicate that when President, Hadžić regularly communicated with Milošević, and was the latter's main contact in the RSK leadership.²⁸ Hadžić did not always follow instructions from Milošević: he insisted on running in the December 1993 RSK elections despite Belgrade's opposition, for example, while in February 1993 he had supported the dismissal of RSK Defence Minister Stojan Španović, to Milošević's considerable anger.²⁹ But on most of the key issues where, for example, Martić and most in Krajina were critical of Belgrade, Hadžić remained loyal. He alone in the RSK leadership supported the Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia in spring 1993, for example, and within the RSK he generally seems to have

²⁵ Domovina Intercepts: C2370 (Karadžić-Milošević, 8/10/1991); B6846 (Karadžić-Milošević, 24/10/1991). ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić. 'Slavonia, Baranja, Accept Special Status', *Tanjug*, 14/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-199, 15/10/1991. 'Slavonia Serbs Refuse To Be Part of Croatia', *Belgrade Radio Network*, 16/10/1991, in FBIS-EEU-91-201, 17/10/1991

²⁶ 'Hadžić: Slavonian Serbs Reject Croatian State', *Belgrade Radio Network*, 16/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-011, 16/1/1992. 'Hadžić 'Disappointed' With UN Plan', *Belgrade RTV Sat TV*, 6/1/1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-005, 8/1/1995. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić. Domovina Intercept: B6946 (Karadžić-Stanišić, 14/12/1991). Marrack Goulding, *Peacemonger* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp.299, 304. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P2364.E (SFRY Presidency minutes, 9/12/1991), p.27.

²⁷ Goulding, p.308. ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Goran Hadžić.

²⁸ Interviews: Slobodan Jarčević, Đorđe Bjeđević (Belgrade: 2011). ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness C-015. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Submission: Public Versions of Confidential Exhibits Part 1 (2/4/2013), p.26. And: Šešelj, *Davolov segrt*, p.609.

²⁹ ICTY-Milošević: E-P667.8.1a (8th Session of the Supreme Defence Council of Yugoslavia, 12/3/1993), pp.20-1. ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović).

positioned himself as closely connected to Milošević.³⁰ Milošević appears to have eventually become frustrated with Hadžić's poor leadership and his lack of authority over Krajina, but there was never really much of an issue of Hadžić resisting Belgrade's orders, and in 1994-97 he again seems to have been working closely with Milošević as leader of Eastern Slavonia.³¹ In 1995 he also accepted the region's negotiated re-integration into Croatia, something he may even have been willing to consider earlier, too.³² Beyond his basic stance of territorial self-determination, Hadžić seems to have lacked firm political convictions and rather than a hardline or fanatical nationalist seems to have been something of an opportunist, open to accepting Milošević's leadership and basing his position within the RSK on the backing of Belgrade rather than attempting to build a support base of his own.

³⁰ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-D1586 (RSK letter to RS, 2/4/1993); Submission: Public Versions of Confidential Exhibits Part 1 (2/4/2013), p.26. Interviews: Slobodan Jarčević, Đorđe Bjegović (Belgrade: 2011). ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović).

³¹ ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović). Caspersen, *op. cit.*, pp.115-6.

³² ICTY-Hadžić: Witness Geert Ahrens, T7790. Caspersen, *op. cit.*, p.104. Degoricija, p.212.

8.2. Serbian Rebels in Eastern Slavonia

In Eastern Slavonia efforts to form local Serbian rebel structures came far later than they did in Krajina, and had not advanced very far even when the war was beginning, in summer and autumn 1991. It was only in early April 1991, after Hadžić was arrested by the Croatian police, that barricades first went up in some Serbian villages in Eastern Slavonia, about seven months after they had been raised in the Knin Krajina. They came down when Hadžić was released. It was around this time that the first significant arms arrived in the region from Serbia, going to local village defence structures in Borovo and elsewhere.³³ The clash in Borovo Selo on 2 May 1991 had a major polarising effect, and thereafter barricades sporadically went up in the region, and arming seems to have been underway.

In SAO-SBZS the key Serbian rebel structures were local police and territorial defence, but efforts to establish these moved slowly. The formation of a SAO police was first announced in April 1991, to be formed of local Serb policemen who had abandoned the MUP. It was not actually established until July, however. Former Vukovar policeman Ilija Kojić was in charge of these efforts, and from July onwards was formally the SAO Defence Minister in charge of establishing the TO, too. At the ICTY a number of different sources, including the secretary of the SAO police in 1991, testified that the founding of the police was co-ordinated with the Serbian MUP/DB in Belgrade and Novi Sad.³⁴ As soon as the police was established in July, assistance was sought and received from the Serbian and Vojvodina police, and Mihalj Kertes. Arms, equipment, uniforms and finances were provided, and whenever new stations were established more were requested and supplied.³⁵

³³ See: Chapter 5, footnote 80.

³⁴ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: JF-032; T14334; Prosecution Appeal Brief (25/9/2013), p.29. Also: Nikolić & Petrović, *Rat u Sloveniji*, p.290.

³⁵ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-032; JF-030; JF-015; Borislav Bogunović; E-553-4 (Witness Statements of Borislav Bogunović); E-P51 (Witness Statement of Milomir Kovačević). Petrović. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 6*, Document 4 (Report about work of SUP Vukovar), pp.11-2. ICJ: Croatia v. Yugoslavia: 'Reply of the Republic of Croatia, Volume 2: Annexes 1-41', 20/12/2010, Annex 8 (Witness Statement of Ž. Č.), pp.25-8. Testimonies in 'Beli Manastir case' (2011), available from:

Kojić was essentially the East Slavonian version of Martić, but, unlike Martić, Kojić does not seem to have established a power base of his own, and was instead very closely connected with the Serbian MUP/DB. The absence of a firm political leadership or governmental institutions at the time, and the easy access to Serbia from the region, probably encouraged people like Kojić to turn to Belgrade. Kojić later said that he had worked with Stanišić from the beginning of the conflict, and in November 1991 he was formally employed by MUP Serbia.³⁶ He was hospitalised in October 1991 and out of action for several months, but thereafter returned to be the key person in the RSK MUP responsible for Eastern Slavonia. In 1994-95 he then played an integral part in the Serbian DB's efforts to separate off the MUP in Eastern Slavonia.³⁷ The precise extent to which Kojić co-ordinated with Belgrade/the DB or took orders from them as opposed to Hadžić in 1991, or Martić in 1992-93, is unclear, but he certainly had a co-operative, and subordinate, attitude towards Belgrade, rather than attempting to create a power base or pursue any agenda of his own like Martić.

Along with Kojić, another key personality in the region was Radoslav (Rade) Kostić. Kostić was an experienced policeman and local police chief who apparently had expectations of being promoted to Assistant Minister before the HDZ came to power.³⁸ Instead, he was pushed out by the new government. Like a number of other Serbian policemen in Croatia at the time, he left for Serbia, where he was employed by the MUP (DB), in December 1990, as 'special advisor' to its chief.³⁹ He thereafter seems to have been active as a DB agent reporting on the situation in Eastern Slavonia and co-

<http://www.hlc-rdc.org>.

³⁶ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P1698 (Statement of Ilija Kojić, 15/2/2008); E-P325 (Documents related to Ilija Kojić, 1991-2001).

³⁷ See, for example: HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 14*, Document 72 (Martić letter to Belgrade, 7/10/1994), pp.168-8, Document 73 (Minutes, meeting of East Slavonia leadership, 7/10/1994), pp.188-9. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-1605 (Intercept Martić-Milošević, 4/10/1994). ICTY-Milošević: E-P681a (VJ Counter-Intelligence report on RSK MUP, 11/1994).

³⁸ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Petar Đukic; JF-026, T9814-5. 'Tenja Case (Darko Radivoj)', Witness Jovan Rebrača (Belgrade: 8/6/2010), p.6, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>.

³⁹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-P406 (Documents related to Radoslav Kostić, 1990-1999). On other police doing this: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Gvozden Gagić, Serbian MUP employee, T17107-8. 'Lavas case', Testimony of Milan Devčić (Belgrade: 24/4/2008), p.3, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>.

ordinating assistance to the region.⁴⁰ He was also apparently involved in the creation of Serbian police, intelligence and military structures there, particularly in his native Baranja (the northern part of Eastern Slavonia).⁴¹ When the RSK MUP was formed he was one of its leading personnel, responsible it seems mainly for Baranja, despite simultaneously working for the DB, and in 1994, like Kojić, he played an active role in the separation of the Eastern Slavonia MUP from Knin. He also had some role in the DB's special units, and in late 1994 was killed in fighting near Bihać.⁴² The 'Red Berets' subsequently named their main training centre after him.

The Serbian DB thus took an active part in the organisation of rebel structures in East Slavonia.⁴³ In addition to this, in autumn 1991 an extremely direct form of assistance was given by Serbia in the form of the arrival of a number of policemen from the Serbian MUP. In July 1991 the SNV requested that Serbia send back all the Serb policemen from the region who (like Kostić) had recently found employment in the Serbian MUP. From around August or September 1991 onwards this was done, with both regular police being sent and a special MUP unit composed of such people.⁴⁴ Even more significantly, around September 1991 the head of Belgrade's special forces, Radovan Stojičić "Badža", along with his entire unit and some other MUP employees, came to the region. Badža was appointed commander of the East Slavonia TO, and took formal command of the entire TO and MUP of the region, particularly after Kojić was wounded in October. Officially the region's Interior Minister was still the local Bogunović, but real authority was held by Badža and his colleagues, and in December 1991 Bogunović was replaced, mainly due to Badža's low opinion of him.⁴⁵ Badža's

⁴⁰ Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, pp.72, 254-5.

⁴¹ ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses JF-032; JF-036. 'Tenja Case (Darko Radivoj)', Witness Jovan Rebrača (Belgrade: 8/6/2010), pp.6-8, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>.

⁴² ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: DST-074, T13262-3. See also: ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: E-1688 (Explanation, SVK 11th corps, 15/4/1994). 'Slobodan Medić case' (Belgrade: 2006), witnesses Dragan Gavrić and Pero Petrašević, available from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>.

⁴³ See also: 'Tenja Case (Darko Radivoj)', Witness Jovan Rebrača (Belgrade: 8/6/2010), pp.6-8, accessed 1/8/2014 from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>. And: 'Lovas case', Testimony of Milan Devčić (Belgrade: 24/4/2008), p.4.

⁴⁴ Petrović, p.106. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witness Nebojša Bogunović. HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 6*, Document 4 (Report about work of SUP Vukovar), pp.11-12. ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović). Testimonies in 'Beli Manastir case' (2011), available from: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/>.

⁴⁵ ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović). ICTY-Hadžić: Witnesses Goran Hadžić;

authority over the TO actually seems to have been limited to 'Operations Group North', above Vukovar, while south of the town the TO fell directly under the JNA.⁴⁶ The police throughout the region, however, were connected with his men, and Serbian MUP employees, mostly men originally from the region, occupied the main roles.

In December 1991 Badža was appointed Assistant Interior Minister of Serbia, and thereafter, with the adoption of the Vance plan, in the first half of 1992 he and almost all the other employees of MUP Serbia left the region, including those originally from there.⁴⁷ They had appointed their replacements, however, and the police, intelligence and defence structures remained tied to the Serbian MUP, particularly Badža and, through Kojić and Kostić, the DB.⁴⁸

The enduring influence of Serbia on Eastern Slavonia is illustrated by the career path of politician Milan Milanović, known as 'Mrgud'. Mrgud was Assistant Minister for Transport of SAO-SBZS in 1991, and when Badža arrived he took him as his local guide. High-ranking RSK intelligence officer Petar Ajdinović recalls him as a 'person that Jovica Stanišić infiltrated' into a high position in the RSK, and Mrgud himself testified that it was because he was close to Badža and seen as a connection with Belgrade that in December 1991 he was appointed acting Minister of Defence of the region. He was the most important figure in defence structures in the region from then on, and later formed his own paramilitary unit, the 'Scorpions', in collaboration with the Serbian DB.⁴⁹ By 1994-95 Mrgud seems to have been even more influential than Hadžić in Eastern Slavonia, and he led the negotiations over the Erdut Agreement, which regulated the region's re-integration into Croatia, in late 1995. And all this was in spite

Borislav Bogunović. ICTY-Stanišić/Simatović: Witnesses C-015; JF-015; Nebojša Bogunović; Borislav Bogunović; E-553-4 (Witness Statements of Borislav Bogunović); Submission: Public Versions of Confidential Exhibits Part 1 (2/4/2013), p.26.

⁴⁶ ICTY-Mrkšić: Witnesses Dušan Jakšić, T19953-4; Miodrag Panić, T14377; Judgement (27/9/2007).

⁴⁷ See: footnote 44.

⁴⁸ See, for example: Šešelj, *Policijski dosije: Treći deo*, p.592. ICTY-Milošević: E-P327.20a (Letter of Dragan Lalić, Secretary of RSK SUP Vukovar, 3/8/1992).

⁴⁹ Email correspondence with Petar Ajdinović, 2011-12. ICTY-Milošević: E-P550 (Statement of Milan Milanović). HMDC-DR, *Knjiga 14*, Document 73 (Minutes, meeting of East Slavonia leadership, 7/10/1994), pp.188-9.

of the fact that, until late 1995, he had never been elected to any position, and owed his career, in fact, to his role as Badža's man in Eastern Slavonia, i.e. to Belgrade.

8.3. Conclusions

The influence of Serbia on Eastern Slavonia from autumn 1991 onwards was considerable. In local security and defence structures employees and agents of Belgrade occupied the key posts, while in the political sphere, too, the region was much more amenable to Belgrade's influence than SAOK. This does not mean that everything that happened in Eastern Slavonia was decided in Belgrade; on the contrary, events such as the Borovo Selo clash in May 1991 developed autonomously, while Hadžić himself was initially on the moderate wing of the SDS and a supporter of Rašković, despite it being fairly evident that Rašković was out of favour with Belgrade. Belgrade's influence seems to have grown principally in the summer and autumn of 1991, when the war proper was already beginning, and was in many respects a consequence of local requests for assistance. Hadžić was not simply a puppet, strongly opposing, for example, the Vance plan at first. But he was generally much more willing to follow Belgrade's lead than either Babić or Martić, and content with local security and defence structures being tied closely to Belgrade.

This contrasts strongly with the rather limited influence that Belgrade had over Krajina. The situations in the two regions were hugely different. In one, employees of the Serbian MUP/DB occupied all the key posts in the security and defence sectors in late 1991, while the politics were led by an opportunist who for most of his career presented himself as an ally and follower of Milošević; in the other, the key people in both politics and security were locals who arose independently, had their own power bases, defended their positions and their authority from encroachment by Belgrade's agents, and regularly clashed with Belgrade in the pursuit of their nationalist and personal agendas.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

Through a cautious and critical use of a range of primary sources, this thesis has offered a detailed examination of Serbia's involvement in the Serbian rebellion and the road to war in Croatia in 1990-91. The findings that have been reached challenge a number of key assumptions and interpretations common to much of the literature on this topic. Whilst these findings cut across the broad schools of thought identified previously ('orthodox', 'multi-factor' and 'revisionist'), they most strongly undercut the analyses put forward in 'orthodox' works, which portray Milošević as the prime orchestrator of the conflict and the puppet-master of the Croatian Serbs, and strengthen elements of 'multi-factor' and 'revisionist' approaches.

Serbia's direct involvement in, and influence over, the Serbian rebellion in Croatia in 1990-91 was limited. The SDS was a fundamentally autonomous and independent movement, and Milošević wielded little influence over both Rašković and Babić. The idea that the Serbs in Croatia had the right to territorial self-determination, to secede from Croatia and 'remain' in a state with other Serbs, was a core policy of the SDS and its president Rašković from the outset, espoused even by the more moderate wings of the party in Slavonia, rather than being a principle introduced by Milošević. Milošević did prefer Babić to Rašković, but Belgrade's role in the SDS's internal factional politics, and specifically the contest between Babić and Rašković, was minor. Babić was very much an independent actor, and a long way from being 'Belgrade's man'. He utilised an alliance of convenience with Milošević for only a brief period, before entering an enduring and bitter political conflict with him. The gradual descent into conflict over the course of 1990 and the first half of 1991 is explained well by interactions between Croats and Serbs within Croatia – the HDZ and the SDS, Zagreb and Knin. The gulf between the two sides was too wide for a compromise to be reached, while a societal security dilemma fuelled the conflict's rapid escalation. Although often lagging behind SDS hardliners, Rašković nevertheless played an integral role in this process, and it was

only much later, as the war was setting in, that he displayed more willingness to compromise his beliefs and accept a solution within an independent Croatia.

The armed rebellion in the Krajina, meanwhile, appears to have been launched by locals and triggered by actions of the Croatian police, rather than being pre-planned or directed by Belgrade. A security dilemma fuelled the arming of both sides, and it is notable that Croatian efforts in this respect, with the arming of the HDZ, significantly exceeded Krajina Serb efforts initially. Far from arming Serb rebels en masse from mid-1990 onwards, Belgrade seems to have been slow to respond to Croatian Serb requests for arms, basing its policy above all on an alliance with the JNA. Mass arming of the Serbs appears to have taken place only from spring 1991 onwards, with the JNA a more significant source of arms than Serbia itself.

It is true that Serbia adopted, from a fairly early stage, a hardline stance towards Croatia. Serbia supported territorial self-determination, and Milošević did expect that this would have to be imposed on the Croats, anticipating at least some conflict. This stance undoubtedly encouraged the Croatian Serb nationalists, and the hardliners amongst them, whose politics of 'recursive' secession from Croatia were clearly supported by Serbia. But Serbia's approach was based overwhelmingly on an alliance with the JNA to secure this solution, and this was far from complete in 1990-91, with the JNA still hoping to maintain Yugoslavia as a whole and genuinely trying to prevent civil war. Beyond this alliance, Serbia lacked a conscious, deliberate or formulated strategy towards Croatia. Far from orchestrating the descent into violence, through a 'parallel structure' or Serb hardliners, Serbia's leadership often advocated caution, precisely because radical moves might alienate the JNA (and the international community) and thus be counter-productive to Serbian goals. Serbia had not 'decided' in favour of war, and throughout 1990-91 peaceful solutions were still being pursued, including a genuine engagement with Tuđman from Karadžević onwards and an attempt to formulate a more acceptable version of self-determination through the idea of 'special status'.

In spring 1991 the Serbian MUP/DB became more actively involved in Croatia, and Serbia had greater influence on the security/defence apparatus in the Krajina than on its politics. Martić generally showed himself to be more willing than Rašković or Babić to listen to and collaborate with Belgrade, and Serbian DB agent Frenki clearly had some influence in the security sector in the region that summer. Martić was still very much an independent figure, however, prepared to clash with Belgrade even in 1991, while Frenki's influence, always limited, was largely curtailed that autumn. Krajina already had well-formed political and military/paramilitary structures, and thus Belgrade's agents could not assume a significant role, meeting resistance when they tried to do so. In Eastern Slavonia, by contrast, as local structures had hardly been formed by this point, Serbia's agents effectively organised, and hence controlled, the region's security structures. The region's nascent political leadership also proved itself much more amenable to Belgrade's influence. The contrast between Krajina and Eastern Slavonia was strong on both these issues, and was to endure throughout the RSK's existence.

Considering in detail the nuances of the relationships between Belgrade and the Croatian Serbs has highlighted the latter's autonomy and independence from Serbia, and Milošević's limited capacity to influence developments in Croatia. It has also shed light on the multifaceted nature of these relationships, which varied by sector, by individual, by region and by time period. It has moreover revealed that 'Belgrade' was not synonymous with Milošević, and different institutions that were formally part of his regime, such as the state-controlled media and the Serbian MUP/DB, had their own interests and agendas, which did not always coincide with his. They were capable of influencing Milošević as well as being influenced by him, and pursued their own interests and agendas across the Drina as well as - and at times even instead of - Milošević's.

The fundamental issue in Croatia in 1990-91 was that there were intractable incompatibilities between Croatian and Serbian thinking on the future of Croatia and, specifically, the Serbs in Croatia, both between the dominant factions in Croatia and

Serbia, and between Croat and Serb nationalists within Croatia. These differences made a negotiated or compromise settlement very unlikely, and security dilemmas soon fuelled arming by both sides and a descent into conflict. These basic elements explain the war in Croatia well, and the existing focus on grand conspiracies and manipulations from Belgrade has, in my opinion, been a misleading distraction from this. There were three sides to this 'triadic nexus' conflict, to use Brubaker's terminology, and there has, to date, been far too much emphasis on just one of these sides – the 'external national homeland', Serbia – to the particular detriment of the 'national minority', the Serbs in Croatia, who, rather than being mere instruments of Belgrade, played a decisive role in the descent into conflict as autonomous and independent actors in their own right.

The findings of this thesis thus call for further re-examination of Milošević's role in the break-up of Yugoslavia. They also call into question the approach taken by the ICTY Prosecution in many of its key cases, including the trials of Milošević, Martić and Stanišić/Simatović, which have owed much to the 'orthodox' interpretation of Milošević. The OTP's adoption of the highly problematic claims of Milan Babić, in particular, should encourage a critical perspective towards its conduct - and opens questions about its politicisation.

This thesis also suggests some further avenues for investigation – for example, extending this study beyond 1991, and examining in greater depth the roles of the Croatian side and the Serbian media, creating a richer picture of the interplay between all the different factors in the 'triadic nexus'. The degree of influence that the political stances of Serbia *indirectly* had on the Serbs in Croatia in 1990-91 also warrants further examination. As external support was required for hardline politics to be feasible, it does seem reasonable to assume that a compromise-inclined Serbian government would have strengthened moderates among the Croatian Serbs. On the other hand, such a government may have held no sway among Serb nationalists in Croatia, who could then have positioned themselves in opposition to Belgrade, allying with the Serbian opposition or hardliners in the Serbian police or JNA. This question would best be

addressed by a broad examination of the history of Croatian-Serbian relations, and in particular of Serbian politics in Croatia, considering the extent to which the stances of Serbs in Krajina and Slavonia in 1990-91 were consistent with that history. A comparison between the Serbian rebellion in Croatia in 1990-91 and Croatian Serb responses to the 'Croatian Spring' of 1970-71 and the 'Sporazum' of 1939 would be particularly fruitful in this respect.

Above all, the conclusions of this thesis challenge the portrayal of Milošević as a Machiavellian schemer who orchestrated the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and support a much more measured assessment of Milošević's goals, strategies and capacity to influence developments in the former Yugoslavia. Ramet's comparison with Richard III perhaps remains apt, for Shakespeare's *Richard III*, like 'orthodox' work on Milošević, gives a one-sided and distorted view of the actual historical personality.¹ An ambitious communist party leader who transformed himself into a populist fighter for Serbian interests, Milošević was one of just many political actors in the period who, often contrary to their own intentions, contributed to the break-up of Yugoslavia. He did not invent the Serbian question in Croatia, and nor did he invent the solution which he advocated. Faced with Yugoslavia's disintegration, Milošević continued his policy of defending what he saw as Serbian national interests. He did so bombastically and with an admittedly easy recourse to force, though not without some thought to exploring a compromise with Zagreb. Milošević supported what he saw as the right of the Serbian nation in Croatia to remain in Yugoslavia rather than face an uncertain future in an independent Croatia. He advocated that Yugoslavia's legal armed forces defend both that right and the Serbs in Croatia from Croatian police interventions, as requested by mainstream Serb representatives in the Krajina and Slavonia. He approved the large-scale arming of the Serbs in Croatia only when JNA efforts to reverse Croatian arming had failed, long after Serbs in the Krajina had made such demands from him. Serbia's support for hardline politics undoubtedly had some influence on the slide into conflict in Croatia, but Milošević was not directing Croatian

¹ Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p.72.

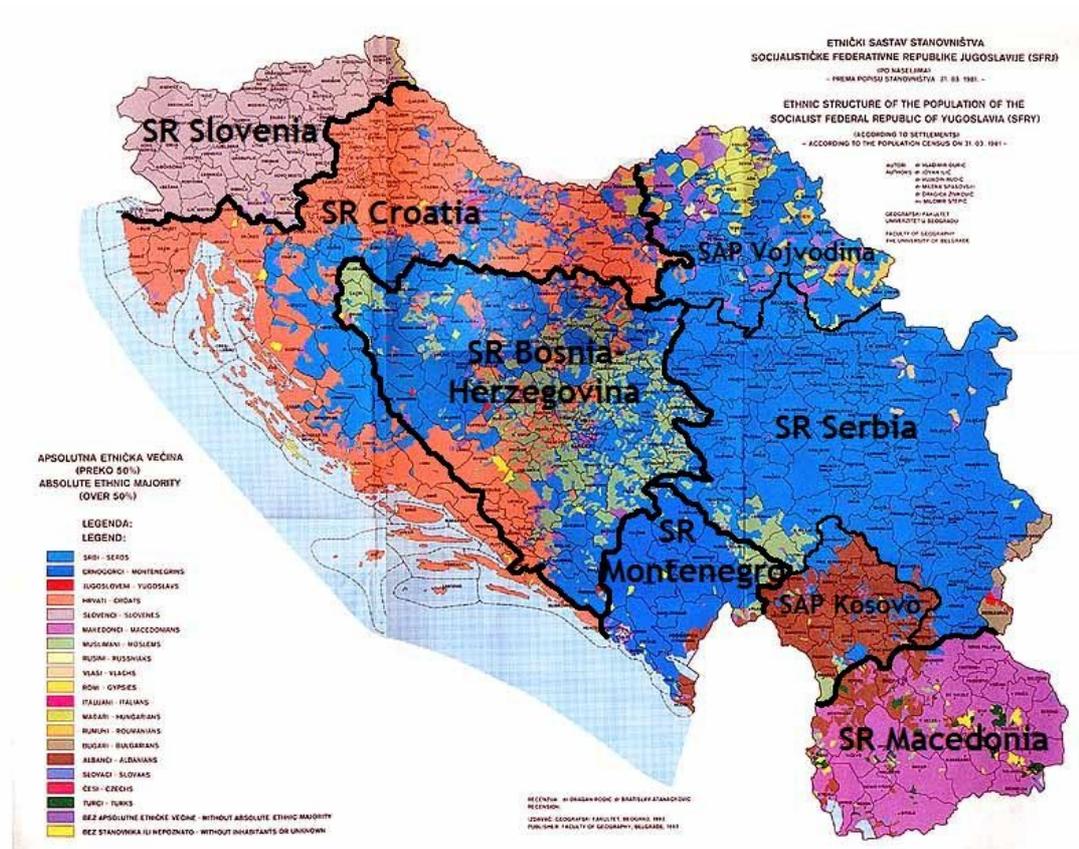
Serb leaders and at this stage had little capacity to control them or developments in Croatia in general (including in Eastern Slavonia, before the war began). If we want to understand developments in Croatia in 1990-91, then, we must in the first place look at what was going on internally within the region, within Croatia, and on the Knin-Zagreb axis, rather than to Milošević and to Belgrade.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Maps and Tables

Figure 1

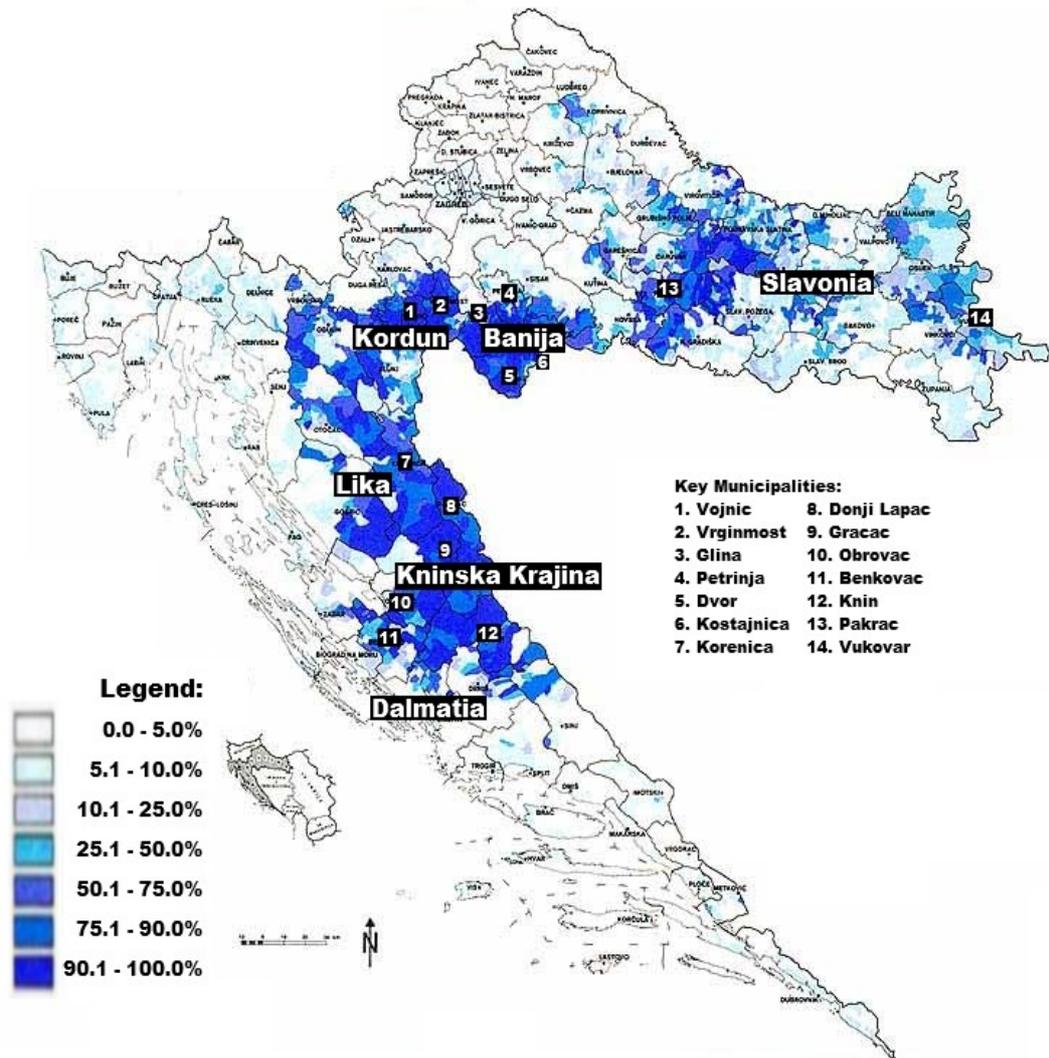
Ethnic map of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, according to the 1981 census



Adapted from Jovan Ilić, 'The Serbs in the Former SR of Croatia', in Jovan Ilić et al, *The Serbian Questions in The Balkans* (Belgrade: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, 1995). Retrieved August 2010 from: <http://www.rastko.org.yu/istorija/srbi-balkan/jilic-croatia.html>

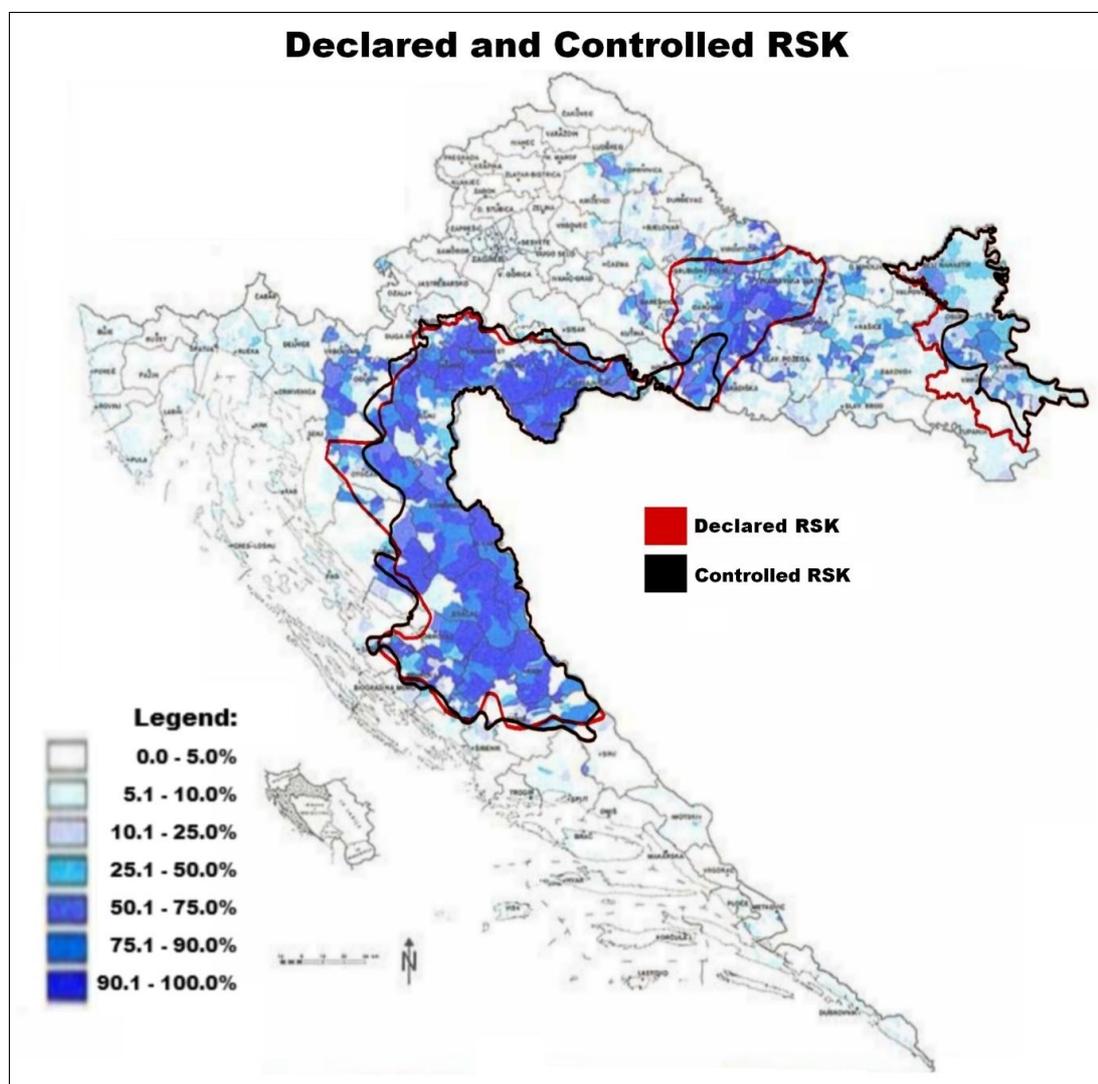
Figure 2

**Territorial Distribution of Serbs in Croatia
According to 1981 census**



Adapted from Ilić, *op. cit.*

Figure 3



The territories claimed by the three Serbian Autonomous Regions in Croatia in 1991, and the territories actually controlled by Serb forces at the end of 1991, forming the RSK.

Adapted from Ilić, op. cit., and ICTY-Martić: E-22.

Figure 4**Population of Serb-Claimed Territories, 1991 census**

The demographic break-downs of the territories claimed by the three Serbian Autonomous Regions in Croatia.

Territory	Total	Serbs	Yugoslavs	Croats	Others
SAO Krajina	265,766	71.3% (189,474)	1.8% (4,800)	23.9% (63,493)	3.0% (7999)
SAO West Slavonia	116,486	44.0% (51,207)	4.2% (4,864)	38.4% (44,731)	13.3% (15,508)
SAO East Slavonia	402,152	22.8% (91,612)	5.2% (20,721)	61.9% (248,897)	10.2% (40,942)
Total	784,404	42.4% (332,293)	3.9% (30,385)	45.5% (357,121)	8.2% (63,999)

Population of Serb-Occupied Territories, 1991 census

The demographic break-down of the territories actually occupied by Serb forces in 1991, and which formed the RSK.

Territory	Total	Serbs	Yugoslavs	Croats	Others
SAO Krajina	296,328	66.3% (196,414)	1.8% (5,374)	28.9% (85,584)	3.0% (8,956)
SAO West Slavonia	23,601	60.0% (14,162)	2.1% (500)	29.1% (6,864)	8.8% (2,077)
SAO East Slavonia	193,513	34.9% (67,561)	6.5% (12,619)	44.5% (86,986)	14.1% (27,337)
Total	513,442	54.2% (278,137)	3.6% (18,493)	34.9% (179,434)	7.5% (38,410)

Figures for Eastern Slavonia are precisely calculated by Živić. The other figures are based on census data but involved some estimations where borders cut through municipal lines.

See: Dražen Živić, *op. cit.*, Kubo, 'The Radicalisation and Ethnicization of Elections'. M. Cherif Bassiouni, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts*, established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (27/5/1994). ICTY-Martić: Amended Indictment.

Appendix 2: Dramatis Personae

Brief biographies of some of the personalities involved in the Yugoslav crisis and the descent into conflict in Croatia.

Adžić, Blagoje. A Serb from Bosnia, chief of staff of the JNA, 1989-92.

Babić, Milan. SDS official and President of Knin, the Association of Municipalities of North Dalmatia and Lika, the Serbian Autonomous Province of Krajina (SAOK) and the Republic of Serbian Krajina (1990-92). Babić was removed as RSK President in February 1992, following his rejection of the Vance peace plan for Croatia. He later served as RSK Foreign Minister (1994-5) and Prime Minister (1995). In 2002 he testified against Milošević in the Hague. He was then indicted for war crimes himself but made a plea agreement. Sentenced to thirteen years, he committed suicide in 2006.

Bogdanović, Radmilo. Milošević ally and Serbian Interior Minister from the late 1980s to May 1991, when he was removed following his controversial role in the March 1991 opposition protests in Belgrade. He subsequently served as chairman of the Serbian Assembly's board for relations with Serbs outside Serbia, and as a functionary of the SPS. Regarded as highly influential in the 1990s, and often connected with Arkan.

Boljkovac, Josip. HDZ official and Interior Minister of Croatia (May 1990-July 1991). Formerly mayor of Karlovac in the 1960s.

Ćosić, Dobrica. Serbian nationalist writer and intellectual. A Partisan in the Second World War, in 1968 he was purged from the Serbian communist party for nationalism, having opposed moves to decentralise Serbia. He was subsequently an influential dissident, and then in 1992-93 served as President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Dakić, Mile. A Croatian Serb, president of Vojnić municipality in the 1970s. President of the small 'Yugoslav Independent Democratic Party', and Vice-President of the SNV, in 1990-91.

Degoricija, Slavko. HDZ and Croatian government official tasked with negotiating with the Serbian minority. President of a chamber of the Croatian Assembly in 1990, and Assistant Minister of Interior in 1991.

Drašković, Vuk. A Serbian writer and nationalist dissident, in 1990 Drašković founded the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO). He and the SPO were the main challengers to Milošević and the SPS in Serbia's December 1990 elections. In March 1991 he led opposition protests against the Milošević regime in Belgrade. He continued to be a prominent opposition leader throughout the 1990s, and served in several post-Milošević governments. Initially an a radical Serbian nationalist, from 1991 onwards he gradually moderated his stances.

Dubajić, Simo. Serb Partisan from Knin, later a self-declared Serb nationalist and a participant in the February 1989 Knin protests. An advisor to the 'Council of National Resistance' (autumn 1990), subsequently also involved in the 'Serbian Guard' paramilitary formation of Serbian opposition leader Vuk Drašković.

Džakula, Veljko. President of the SDS in Pakrac and leading member of the SDS Regional Board for Slavonia (1990-91). President of SAO West Slavonia (1991-92) and Deputy Prime Minister of the RSK (1992-93). In 1993-94 he was arrested several times for his role in talks with Croatia. Subsequently a key leader of the Serbian minority remaining in Croatia.

Filipović, Dragan (“Fiča”). Member of the Serbian DB, active in Krajina in 1991 and subsequently involved in the DB's 'Red Berets'.

Glavaš, Branimir. Influential HDZ rightist in Slavonia. Eventually tried for war crimes against Serbian civilians during the war.

Gračanin, Petar. A Second World War Partisan and JNA general, Gračanin was President of Serbia in 1987-89 and then Federal Interior Minister in 1989-92.

Hadžić, Goran. President of the SDS in Vukovar and member of the SDS Regional Board for Slavonia (1990-91); member of the Serbian National Council of East Slavonia (1991); President of SAO East Slavonia (1991-92) and then the RSK (1992-93). In 1994-97 he was again active as a leader of East Slavonia. In 2011 he was arrested in Serbia and extradited to the ICTY for trial for war crimes against Croats and other non-Serbs.

Izetbegović, Alija. President of the Bosnian Muslim 'Party of Democratic Action' from 1990, and President of Bosnia from 1991 to 2000.

Jović, Borisav. Serbia's representative on the SFRY Presidency, 1989-92, an ally of Slobodan Milošević and leading official of Milošević's Socialist Party (SPS) until late 1995.

Kadijević, Veljko. Yugoslav Federal Defence Secretary (1988-92). Born in Imotski, Croatia, to a Serb father and a Croatian mother, and married to a Croatian, Kadijević declared himself at the time of the disintegration a 'Yugoslav', though he later described himself as a Yugoslav Serb.

Karadžić, Radovan. President of the Bosnian SDS (1990-96) and Republika Srpska (1992-96). Indicted for genocide in 1995, Karadžić spent many years in hiding before being arrested in Belgrade in 2008 and extradited to the Hague for trial.

Kertes, Mihajl. A Serbian politician of Hungarian ethnicity, rose to prominence as a Milošević supporter in Vojvodina in 1988-89 and later served as a member of the Presidency of Serbia (1989-90), Deputy Federal Interior Minister (1992) and Federal Minister of Customs (1993-2000). Convicted for corruption after the fall of Milošević.

Letica, Slaven. Principal advisor to President Tuđman in 1990.

Mamula, Branko. Yugoslav Federal Defence Secretary (1983-88). In 1990-91 Mamula was involved in the SK-PJ. A Serb from Croatia.

Marković, Ante. President of Croatia (1986-88), and the last Prime Minister of Yugoslavia (1989-91). A Croat from Bosnia.

Martić, Milan. A police inspector in Knin, Martić served as Secretary and then Minister of the Krajina and RSK police (1991-1994), and then President of the RSK (1994-95). Eventually tried and convicted for war crimes at the ICTY.

Mesić, Stjepan (Stipe). Leading official of the HDZ and Croatia, serving as president of the HDZ Executive Board, Prime Minister of Croatia (May-August 1990) and Croatia's representative on the SFRY Presidency (October 1990-December 1991). He split from Tuđman and the HDZ in 1994, and served as President of Croatia from 2000 to 2010.

Mikelić, Borislav. A prominent Croatian Serb communist in the late 1980s. Member of the Central Committees of the League of Communists of Croatia and Yugoslavia (1989-90), President of the 'Socialist Party of Croatia - Party of Yugoslav Orientation' (1990-91) and RSK Prime Minister (1994-95).

Milošević, Slobodan. President of the League of Communists of Serbia (1986-89), of Serbia (1989-97) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1997-2000). Milošević was

overthrown following electoral manipulations in 2000 and extradited to the Hague the following year. He died in 2006, before the end of his trial for war crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Opačić, Jovan. Knin economist and founding President of Serbian cultural society 'Zora' in 1989, arrested and imprisoned for his role in disturbances in Knin that July. Later a founder of the SDS and one of its Sabor Deputies from Knin. He left the party in September 1990 but returned in spring 1991. He later served as head of the Red Cross of Krajina.

Orlović, Dušan. Secretary of Serbian cultural society 'Zora' from 1989, an organiser of the Serbian rebellion in Knin in August 1990, and chief of the Krajina DB from January 1991 to August 1992. Orlović thereafter served in the Serbian DB, until retirement in 2005.

Pekić, Dušan. A Croatian Serb Partisan in the Second World War and 'National Hero', later a prominent JNA general and head of the Veterans Association of Yugoslavia. In 1990-91 Pekić was involved in the SK-PJ and the Belgrade-based Association of Serbs from Croatia.

Perišić, Momčilo. JNA officer and from 1993 to 1998 commander of the Yugoslav army. Eventually tried in the Hague for war crimes in Croatia and Bosnia, but acquitted on appeal.

Pupovac, Milorad. Professor of linguistics at Zagreb University, a Croatian Serb originally from the Benkovac region, Pupovac was involved in a series of reformist and social democratic parties in Croatia in 1990-91, before initiating the formation of the Serbian Democratic Forum in the second half of 1991. He led the SDF until 1995, and has continued to be politically active as a key representative of the Serbian community in Croatia since then.

Rašković, Jovan. A Sibenik-based psychiatrist originally from Knin, Rašković was the president of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) from its founding in February 1990 to his death in July 1992.

Ražnatović, Željko (“Arkan”). Serbian career criminal, engaged by the Federal Security Service to assassinate foreign emigres. Leader of 'Red Star' football club fans and of the paramilitary 'Serbian Volunteer Guard', also known as 'Arkan's Tigers' (1991-95). Murdered in Belgrade in 2000.

Šarinić, Hrvoje. Close associate of Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, serving as presidential chief of staff, Croatian Prime Minister (1992-3), and envoy for talks with Slobodan Milošević (1993-95).

Šeselj, Vojislav. A Serb nationalist and extremist, founder of the Serbian Chetnik Movement in 1990, and the Serbian Radical Party in 1991, which he led until handing himself over to the ICTY in 2003. His trial is still ongoing.

Simatović, Franko (“Frenki”). A Belgrade-born officer of the Serbian DB of partly Croatian descent, Frenki was a prominent DB officer in the 1990s and in charge of their famous fighting unit, the 'Red Berets'. Later tried for war crimes at the ICTY, but found not guilty in 2013.

Špegelj, Martin. A former JNA commander who served as Croatian Minister of Defence from August 1990 to July 1991, and then chief inspector of the Croatian armed forces. Later a prominent critic of Tuđman.

Stambolić, Ivan. Milošević's predecessor as President of the Serbian communist party and Serbia, a friend of his and his chief patron. The two clashed in 1987, and Stambolić was defeated and pushed into resigning and leaving the political life of Serbia. He was

murdered in 2000, apparently on Milošević's orders, after rumours that he would be re-engaging in politics.

Stanišić, Jovića. Prominent official of the Serbian DB, of which he was chief from December 1991 to October 1997. Later tried at the ICTY, but – rather surprisingly - found not guilty in 2013.

Štarević, Dušan. A Croatian Serb judge in Benkovac, and former president of Benkovac municipality. Founder and president of Serbian cultural society 'Prosvjeta' in 1990-91, involved in the formation of the SDS and the SDF, and vice-president of Krajina in 1991. Died in 1992.

Stojičić, Radovan (“Badža”). Head of Belgrade's special police unit, in autumn 1991 Badža served as commander of the territorial defence of Eastern Slavonia. At the end of the year he was promoted to assistant interior minister and chief of all public security in Serbia, a post he held until his assassination in 1997.

Tuđman, Franjo. President of the Croatian Democratic Union (from 1989) and Croatia (from May 1990) until his death in December 1999. Formerly a Partisan in the Second World War and a general in the JNA, Tuđman turned towards nationalism in the 1960s and became a dissident after the crushing of the 'Croatian Spring' in 1971, serving several spells in prison as a result.

Vance, Cyrus. US Secretary of State (1977-80) and UN diplomat, negotiated the Vance plan ending the war in Croatia in autumn and winter 1991, as well as the failed Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia in 1992-93.

Vasiljević, Aleksandar. Deputy chief of JNA security from July 1990, in charge of monitoring arming in Croatia. In June 1991 he became its chief, remaining in that post until being pushed into retirement in May 1992.

Vasiljković, Dragan ('Captain Dragan'/Daniel Snedden). A Serb from Belgrade who lived in Australia, Vasiljković returned to Yugoslavia in 1990 and began to involve himself in local politics. From April or May to August 1991 he was a Krajina special forces instructor in the Golubić training camp near Knin, and leader of its 'Knindže' unit. He subsequently founded the 'Captain Dragan Foundation' helping disabled war veterans, and was involved in several more training camps in Bosnia and Croatia. Currently in the process of being extradited from Australia to Croatia on allegations of war crimes.

Vukčević, Vojislav. SDS official from Beli Manastir in Baranja, Eastern Slavonia. An SDS vice-president from September 1990 and a prominent moderate, he was pushed into resigning from the party in April 1991. He was later active in the SPO in Serbia.

Zelenbaba, Dušan. SDS activist and Sabor deputy from Knin (1990-91). He briefly left the party with Opačić in September 1990, joining Vuk Drašković's SPO, but returned in spring 1991. He later emigrated to Canada.

Appendix 3: Chronology

Basic chronology of some key events in the Yugoslav crisis and the conflict in Croatia.

1987

September 1987

The 'Eighth Session' of the League of Communists of Serbia. Slobodan Milošević triumphs over his former patron Ivan Stambolić.

1988

October 1988

The 'Yoghurt Revolution' in Vojvodina – mass protests lead to the resignation of the province's leadership and its replacement with supporters of Milošević.

November 1988

The leadership of Kosovo resigns, to be replaced by officials who endorse proposed changes to Serbia's constitution, downgrading the status of the provinces. Mass protests of Albanians begin in support of the former leaders.

1989

January 1989

The leadership of Montenegro resigns following protests, to be replaced by allies and supporters of Milošević.

28 February 1989

Initiative meeting of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) in Zagreb, led by Franjo Tuđman.

The first Serb protests take place in Knin.

23 March 1989

Amendments to Serbia's constitution passed, decreasing the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

June 1989

Croatian Assembly decides to maintain the existing definition of the 'Croatian literary language'. A quarter of deputies support a proposal to remove the Serbs from the existing constitutional definition of Croatia.

The HDZ is formally founded.

28 June 1989

Mass rally of more than a million Serbs in Gazimestan, Kosovo, to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo Battle. Milošević delivers a controversial speech.

7 July 1989

Serbian cultural society 'Zora' is created by Serb nationalists in Knin.

8-9 July 1989

Kosovo Celebration in Knin, which partly turns into a Serb nationalist protest against Zagreb. Jovan Opačić, president of 'Zora', is arrested.

September 1989

Slovenia passes constitutional amendments asserting its sovereignty.

1990

January 1990

14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Slovene and Croat delegations abandon the congress, bringing the unified Yugoslav party to an end.

17 February 1990

The Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) is founded, with Jovan Rašković as its president.

April - May 1990

Multi-party elections in Croatia. The HDZ takes 55% of Sabor seats with 41.9% of the vote. The SDS wins control of a few Serb-majority municipalities around Knin.

10 May 1990.

Rašković has his first formal meeting with Tuđman in Zagreb.

23 May 1990

The SDS decides to form an Association of Municipalities, uniting Serb-majority municipalities.

Milan Babić is elected President of Knin.

30 May 1990

Inaugural session of the new Croatian Sabor. New authorities elected, with Tuđman as President and Mesić as Prime Minister.

27-28 June 1990

Jović and Milošević first discuss 'cutting off' Croatia and Slovenia.

28 June 1990

The Association of Municipalities of North Dalmatia and Lika is constituted. Babić is its President.

23 July 1990

Rašković has his second, and final, meeting with Tuđman, along with his advisor Slaven Letica, in Zagreb.

25 July 1990

Croatia passes amendments to its constitution, which the SDS rejects.
At a mass rally of 120,000 Serbs in Srb, Donji Lapac, the Serbian National Council (SNV) is formed. A 'Declaration on the Sovereignty and Autonomy of the Serbian Nation in Croatia' is adopted.

31 July 1990

First meeting of the SNV. Babić is elected its President and a referendum is called on Serbian autonomy.
The transcript of Rašković's latest talks with Tuđman is published in Croatian weekly *Danas*.

7 August 1990

SDS leaders Opačić and Zelenbaba seek Rašković's resignation, but fail to win support.

17 August 1990

The 'Balvan Revolution' (Log Revolution), the Serbian rebellion in the Knin Krajina, breaks out.

10 September 1990

Babić conducts negotiations with a Croatian state delegation in Donji Lapac.

Late September 1990

Conflicts between Croatian police and Serbs break out in Banija, and tensions escalate in the Knin Krajina.

2 October 1990

Croatia and Slovenia officially present their proposal for a Yugoslav confederation.

20 October 1990

The SDS formally adopts a more radical party policy: territorial autonomy in federal Yugoslavia, and secession from Croatia in the event of a confederation or independence.

December 1990

Croatia passes its new constitution, downgrading the status of Serbs and positioning the republic for independence. The Serbian Autonomous Province of Krajina (SAOK) is formed, led by Babić.

Multi-party elections in Serbia. Slobodan Milošević and his Socialist Party of Serbia win.

1991

January 1991

The Krajina Secretariat of the Interior (SUP) is created, headed by Milan Martić.

The JNA releases information on the arming of paramilitary formations across Yugoslavia, and the SFRY Presidency adopts a decision on their disarmament. Croatia refuses to disarm.

A Serbian National Council (SNV) of East Slavonia is formed.

February 1991

Croatia adopts a decision on 'disassociation' from Yugoslavia; Krajina adopts a decision on 'disassociation' from Croatia.

2 March 1991

Croatian police forces intervene in Pakrac, Western Slavonia, after the municipality attempts to join SAOK. The JNA in turn steps in as a 'buffer'.

9 March 1991

The Serbian opposition organises mass protests against the Milošević regime in Belgrade.

15 March 1991

The SFRY Presidency fails to adopt the JNA's proposals for Yugoslav-wide disarmament of paramilitaries.

16 March 1991

Borisav Jović and other pro-Serb representatives on the SFRY Presidency resign, to open the way for a planned JNA coup. The JNA, however, changes its mind and declines to act.

Krajina adopts a decision on seceding from Croatia.

Babić forms a separate Regional Board of the SDS for Krajina.

31 March 1991

Croatian police eject Krajina forces from Plitvice parks in Korenica. One Croat and one Serb die. The JNA intervenes as a 'buffer'.

1 April 1991.

Krajina declares its annexation to Serbia.

2 May 1991

Clash between Croatian police and Serbs in Borovo Selo, Vukovar. Twelve Croats and three Serbs die. The JNA again steps in to separate the two sides.

9 May 1991

SFRY Presidency unanimously approves measures intended to prevent Croat-Serb conflicts in Croatia, including the deployment of the JNA in Croatia to prevent clashes.

12 May 1991

Krajina holds referendum on annexing to Serbia and remaining in Yugoslavia.

19 May 1991

Croatia holds referendum on independence.

25 June 1991

Croatia declares independence from Yugoslavia.
SAO East Slavonia is formed, led by Goran Hadžić.

13 July 1991

Lipik Declaration of Serbian intellectuals and politicians in Croatia.

12 August 1991

SAO West Slavonia is formed, led by Veljko Džakula.

September 1991

Full-scale war breaks out between Croatian forces and the JNA. JNA barracks are besieged and attacked throughout Croatia; the JNA launches offensive operations against Croatia.

18 October 1991.

'Carrington Plan' presented at EC-sponsored negotiations in the Hague. Serbia rejects the plan.

23 November 1991

Geneva Agreement between Tuđman, Milošević and Kadijević, part of the plan of UN negotiator Cyrus Vance for JNA withdrawal from Croatia and deployment of UN peacekeepers in the Krajinas.

19 December 1991

Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK) is formed.

23 December 1991

Germany recognises Croatia as an independent state. The rest of the world soon follows suit.

1992

2-3 January 1992

Lasting ceasefire in Croatia reached.

February - March 1992

Babić is removed as President of the RSK, following a sustained campaign by Belgrade due to his rejection of the Vance peace plan. A united RSK Assembly elects new authorities, which support the plan. Goran Hadžić is chosen as the new RSK President.

1993

December 1993 – January 1994

Presidential and parliamentary elections in the RSK. In a run-off between Milan Babić and Milan Martić, Martić is declared the winner and becomes President of the RSK. Babić's SDS Krajina, however, wins the most parliamentary seats.

1994

29 March 1994

New ceasefire agreement signed between Croatia and RSK.

April 1994

New RSK government is constituted, with Borislav Mikelić as Prime Minister, and Babić as Foreign Minister.

December 1994

Economic agreement between Croatia and RSK reached.

1995*January 1995*

The international community's 'Z-4 Plan' for Serbian autonomy within Croatia is presented to Zagreb, Knin and Belgrade.

May 1995

'Operation Flash' – Croatia takes control of RSK-controlled West Slavonia. In response, Krajina forces shell Zagreb.
RSK Prime Minister Mikelić is dismissed.

August 1995

'Operation Storm' – Croatia takes control of the Krajina. Most of its population flee.

November 1995

'Erdut Agreement' on returning East Slavonia to Croatian control, after UN-administered transition.

December 1995

Dayton Agreement ending the war in Bosnia.

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