



The historical link between the Ustasha genocide and the Croato-Serb civil war: 1991–1995

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Some thoughts on forgotten genocide

The Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945) (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, or NDH, the Croatian acronym), was set up by Hitler and Mussolini after their joint attack on Yugoslavia in April, 1941. As such, Croatia also included Bosnia-Herzegovina, but had to cede Istria and littoral Croatia to Italy. As a willing and faithful ally of the Axis powers, Croatia was a typical fascist and genocidal state (not less than Nazi Germany), headed by a leader (*Poglavnik*) Ante Pavelic, who had founded his Ustasha organization in exile in Italy since 1931.¹ The Ustasha was an extreme nationalist and also a terrorist organization, the goal of which was the separation of Croatia from Yugoslavia and the creation of an independent Croatian state which would include all lands inhabited historically by Croats. As a movement, the Ustasha wanted to create a greater Croatia without the Serbs, whose number, at the time NDH was created, was 1,925,000.² As soon as they were in control of the state (the NDH was formally proclaimed on April 10, 1941), Pavelic's Ustasha started a reign of terror unprecedented in Balkan history, and in the four years killed over half a million people.³ The victims were primarily Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as Jews and Gypsies, but also Croatian communists and others who dared to oppose the NDH. In view of the destruction of Jews (some 33,500 killed), and Gypsies (some 20,000 killed), in its territory, the NDH was also a racist society. Its first laws in the form of administrative rules or decrees signed by the *Poglavnik*, were in fact clear imitations of the Nazi Nuremberg laws of 1935.⁴

It is significant that for this particular genocide Helen Fein, in her major work on genocide, used the expression "Holocaust of the Orthodox Serbs of Croatia,"⁵ and Sava Bosnitch (University of New Brunswick), voicing the view of Serbs, said: "The genocide, a joint enterprise of the Roman Catholic and Muslim Ustashes, was to Serbs what the Holocaust was to Jews across Europe."⁶

Since most genocides are viewed as historical process, "progress", through certain stages of which the first one is usually a genocidal idea or ideology, while the last one being denial, it may be helpful to use this conceptualization to shed some light on a possible historical connection between the Ustasha genocide and

the genocidal killings and persecutions in the civil wars of Yugoslav disintegration in 1990–1995.

As with other genocides, the Ustasha genocide has its own deniers. The denials range from simple negation of the historical event, via an effort to deflate the numbers of victims, to statements that it was not intended, and that all Serbs were not meant to be destroyed. A more sophisticated and highly damaging form of denial is the one passing under the guise of scholarly work. One variation of this tactic is simply glossing over the event by not mentioning it. One strand is simple exclusion of the topic from a conference, or a volume containing readings on genocide, or another, by describing the Ustasha genocide in a few hardly adequate sentences, or characterizing it simply as persecutions and acts of terrorism.⁷ As puzzling as it is, however, the genocide scholars in a number of the leading collected readings on genocide do not include an article on Ustasha genocide as an important event in recent European history.⁸ Since the voices of denial are lately coming from Croatian, American and Canadian scholars, it may be an indication that such attitudes, in addition to reflecting an ideological position of their writers, are in tune with current political correctness and the demonization of Serbs in the mass media and politics. Such demonizations have undoubtedly played a significant role in the ideological preparation for the recent NATO aggression toward the Former Republic of Yugoslavia.

For the purposes of this article, genocide can be conceived as a deliberate, organized and systematic destruction of large numbers of people belonging to a distinct group such as national, ethnic, religious, racial or political. A frequently used definition is the legal one of the UN Genocide Convention (1948), where genocide is defined as acts intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group by killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm to group members, and deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life to cause its physical destruction.

Since Ustasha genocide involved deliberate destruction of targeted groups primarily by killing, expulsion and sporadically by forced religious conversion, it was undoubtedly a genocide *par excellence*. It was also done in an organized and systematic way by the national state.

The concept of civil war is more difficult to define. However, as used in this paper, civil war refers to internal armed conflicts in the territories of former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995, and in particular, to the conflicts between Croat police forces and the special armed units on the one hand, and the Serb paramilitary forces and counter separatists in the so-called Krajina on the other, during the same period. At the beginning of this conflict (1991) Croatia was still a part of the Yugoslav federation, and the conflicts could be considered as an internal war. And when the Croatian government and its army finally destroyed Krajina in May and August, 1995, it was still an internal conflict within the now independent Croatian state.

The link

In exploring connections between historical events one can probe only tentatively into the factors which were influential in producing the final result consisting in historically ascertainable facts. Thus, the connection between the Ustasha genocide and the Croato-Serb conflicts and war in the 1990s could be explored in the following three dimensions, some of which are discussed in this study:

- (1) Collective trauma rooted in genocidal experience of a victimized group and expressed as fear and threat resulting from disorientation following the disintegration of the state.
- (2) The politics of memory through so-called "media war" in the 1980s aimed at fanning fear and hatred.
- (3) Revival of ultra-nationalist ideologies of *Ustashism* and *Chetnikism*, respectively, as genocidal ideologies of World War II genocides.

In his letter to his brother in Canada, J. L., from Sjenicak near Karlovac, describes a difficult decision to leave his village with his family (son, daughter-in-law and grandchild), and join a long column of vehicles for Serbia during the Croatian military operation "Storm" in August 1995. He says he could not imagine watching his own children being butchered in front of his very eyes. Obviously, he was referring to the genocide of Serbs perpetrated by the Ustasha 50 years ago. Although a single instance is inadequate to prove the link between the two events, this particular case nevertheless provides an important insight into the motives and fears of a man who was personally and existentially involved in both events and undoubtedly traumatized. J. L. was eight when his father was taken to Jasenovac camp in 1942, never to be seen by his family again. His example was by no means an isolated case. B. K. from Glina (Banija), was facing the same fears when in 1995 he too had to flee with his family. And he also lost his father when he was a small child in an Ustasha massacre in 1941. He was too small to remember his father, so when I saw him last in the summer of 1990, B. K. asked me, "Do you remember your father?" Another case came to my attention recently. A woman, whose throat was slashed by the Ustasha, but miraculously survived, was horrified upon hearing news about the revival of Croatian nationalism in 1991, which was perceived by many Serbs in Croatia as a resurgence of *Ustastvo* (ustashism). No one can deny that this lady had a scar for her life in the double meaning of the term.⁹

The few cases cited above are typical examples of widespread fears, forebodings and anxieties instinctively shared by multitudes of Serbs all of whom were fully aware of the horrors of the Ustasha genocidal terror. These cases deal with fears deeply rooted in individuals' personal experiences of terror and massacres of 50 years ago. They are used as an illustration of the link between the two historical events spanning the 50 years of human life.

The anonymous woman, mentioned above, J. L., and B. K. were not rebelling against Croatian authorities in 1991. Rather they were victims of the circum-

stances following the disintegration of the state and of the concomitant rise of new elites using ideology of exclusivistic nationalism (both in Serbia and Croatia), to legitimize their claim to power. With the new Croatian Constitution (December 1991), the Serbs in Croatia (600,000 or close to 12 percent of the population of the Republic of Croatia), were relegated from constitutional people (as in the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia), to the status of a minority. The old Constitution contained in its first article the following formulation: "The Socialist Republic of Croatia is the national state of Croatian nation, the state of Serbian nation in Croatia, as well as the state of other nationalities which live in it."¹⁰ The new Constitution in its preamble declared Croatia the homeland of the Croatian nation alone. The Serbs were relegated to the rank of a national minority, along with Italians, Hungarians and others. Thus for the Serbs the new Croatian constitution was a humiliating collective "*capitis deminutio maxima*."

These feelings of being threatened and fears for one's own personal security and position in society were justified in view of frequent provocation by Croat nationalists, who loudly celebrated and trumpeted their victory in the 1990 elections. Undoubtedly, in 1941 the Serbs in Croatia were traumatized by the Ustasha onslaught on their very existence.¹¹ However, in 1941, the atrocities and massacres by the Ustasha against the peaceful peasants were totally unprovoked, and the uprising by the victimized Serbs and Croatian communists followed in their footsteps. In the 1990s, the course of events was different. After the electoral victory of the Croatian Democratic Union (Tudjman's HDZ), first came dismissals from government jobs, harassment and discrimination, followed by sporadic acts of vandalism and attacks on property (e.g. cars, summer cottages, businesses), and even physical attacks and murders in some localities. The perpetrators were not prosecuted, and the Serbs had reason to be fearful. Feeling unprotected by the new government, they lost the sense of security.¹² Particularly provocative acts for Serbs were the arrival of Croatian police (now called *redarstvo*, the same term as used by the NDH), by buses from Zagreb in order to take over the militia stations from the local officials, many of whom were Serbs. Serbs could not but recall the fatal 1941, when their fathers and brothers disappeared overnight, being taken away by Ustasha who also came in buses to their home towns or villages. As Eric Markusen put it: "Under such circumstances it was impossible not to recall the horrors of Ustasha atrocities from the 1940s. The traumatization of fifty years ago was resurfacing again as an evil demon."¹³

It would be an oversimplification, and even inaccurate, to insist that the Ustasha genocide was a causal factor in the civil wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s. However, when events are viewed in longer historical perspective, and in terms of their dialectical interconnectedness, this link must be considered because it was an important contributory factor looming in the background of those armed conflicts.¹⁴

With this comes the central question of this article: Why did the Serbs not want to live as a minority in the new Croatian state outside of Yugoslavia? A

straightforward and obvious answer is: A fear that the history of the Ustasha domination might repeat itself. To put it differently, had they not experienced and remembered the horrors of 1941 and the Ustasha knives, they would likely not have risen against the Croatian government. Serb fears were intensified by the new government's drastic practices of discrimination and mass violation of civil rights. These excesses were accompanied by the official resurrection of symbols of the NDH in language, military ranks, communication, and, most drastically, by the subsequent introduction of the "kuna" as the legal tender used only during NDH. And finally, to understand the link, we must keep in mind that Serbs, whose ancestors have lived in Croatia for the past four hundred years, found themselves under Croatian rule only once, in the NDH during World War II, and at that time as persecuted victims of genocide.

Under the conditions of a disintegrating state, anxieties and fears inevitably enhance distrust between citizens of different ethnic origins. As Michael Ignatieff, following Freud, and using his expression "narcissism of minor difference," has shown, these minor differences are blown out of proportion and presented as major differences when used as makers of power and status.¹⁵ Under such conditions the only group one can trust is his own ethnic, religious or kin group, which makes ethnic nationalism the only remaining basis of trust.¹⁶

It is precisely in this mutual situation of distrust that ordinary citizens become an easy prey to powerful mass-media propaganda disseminating nationalist ideologies (Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian), promoting the goals of newly rising elites. The leadership of these new regional elites in different republics of the Yugoslav federation frequently included the old communist ideologists and demagogues who skillfully and readily transformed themselves into ardent nationalists. In this process of generating the ideologies of nationalism, the intelligentsia (writers, journalists, historians and academics), dutifully played their role of hired guns.

In fact, both Serb and Croat leaders exploited aspects of the World War II genocide for political purposes. This was well understood, and described by Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, who pointed out in their recent book that World War II memories of fratricidal killings indeed played an important part in the march toward war, but since the emotions associated with it had by and large been laid to rest, they had to be reawakened, and this was successfully done by the leadership both in Serbia and Croatia. "To start the war, therefore, those emotions had to be not only reawakened but exacerbated by half-truths and innuendo."¹⁷

Thus, in the so-called "media war," which preceded Yugoslav disintegration and the civil war, numerous publications appeared depicting vividly with photographic documentation the genocidal massacres and tortures of World War II. Many of them were on Ustasha genocide in NDH and were published in Belgrade. Besides volumes of documents edited by V. Dedijer and A. Miletić, a prominent place was given to three volume set of documents edited by M. Bulajić.¹⁸ Viktor Novak's voluminous *Magnum Crimen* (1948), was reprinted in 1986.¹⁹ Croats have also published on the so-called "Bleiburg tragedy" depicting

and documenting the destruction of defeated Ustasha forces at the Austrian border by Tito's army in May, 1945.²⁰ Undoubtedly, all these publications had a definite political message and purpose. However, the contention that publications on Ustasha crimes were prohibited in the Second Yugoslavia is neither correct nor convincing. It is more correct to say that they were not encouraged.

A mention should be made of the extraordinary practice in 1990 of exhumations of "mass graves" from World War II, in which Serb victims of the Ustasha, and Croat victims of Partisans, were exposed and exploited by the media, as Markusen pointed out.²¹ It is obvious that the real purpose of such exhumations, including the publications on war crimes and the genocides of World War II, was to enhance ethnic consciousness and to disseminate hatred, and desire for vengeance. As Eric Markusen put it, "Old psychological wounds were opened again as the bones of numerous victims were unearthed. Genocide, both as recent historical reality and as future danger, was brought to the minds of insecure, frightened and often angry citizens."²²

The revival of ultra-nationalist ideologies of "Ustashism" and "Chetnikism" has undoubtedly contributed to the destruction of the Second Yugoslavia. Although a powerful force in society, the ideas are always rooted in, and generated by, social groups who are their social carriers. Nationalist ideology is in fact a political formula advanced and promoted by the ruling elites as a set of values, sentiments, beliefs and ideas which justifies and legitimizes the domination.

As is well known, Croatian nationalism was quite prominent in 1971, and was in fact suppressed by Tito. Although it was somewhat dormant until Tito's death in 1980, it was revived with the general crisis of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe in 1989. The same decade witnessed the rise of Serbian nationalism in Serbia, particularly with the rise to power in 1986 of Slobodan Milosevic. There is little doubt that both Croatian and Serbian nationalism were successfully feeding on each other, and that the Serbs in Croatia could not but be implicated. It is generally assumed that the Serbian nationalism in the 1980s (with Milosevic's rise to power in 1986), was the first major cause in the dissolution of Yugoslavia since it was not acceptable to Slovenes and Croats. What this journalistic, oversimplified and one-sided view misses is that Croatian nationalism was already on the rise in the 1960s, achieving its culmination in 1971 with the so-called "Croatian Spring" or *Maspok* (mass movement). Thus, the renewed Croat anti-Yugoslav and anti-Serb nationalism began long before Tito's death. Tito was then compelled to purge the Croat separatist ringleaders in 1971,²³ and this was long before anyone knew Slobodan Milosevic existed. It is, therefore, in order to quote a few sentences from Tito's secret speech delivered on July 4, 1971, and published in *Vjesnik u Srijedu* (Zagreb), a year later. Referring to the rampant nationalism in Croatia these were some of his worrisome thoughts:

This time I shall speak up first. You can see that I am very angry ... the situation in Croatia is not very good. Croatia has gone wild with nationalism. It is the key problem in the whole country. Similar moods exist everywhere in all republics but the worst is here. Nationalism

must be fought in a more effective way. It is a matter of class struggle, the issue being whether socialism or nationalism will prevail. ... Perturbed, some Serb villagers are arming themselves and organizing village defences. Are we once more going to have a year like 1941? That would be a disaster. The outsiders are watching us. Are you not aware that they would get involved as soon as there is unrest here. I would rather use our army to restore order than to allow others to do so. ... (The situation in the world is serious) we cannot afford to quarrel inside Yugoslavia. Domestic enemies are receiving strong support from abroad. Great powers will take anyone willing to work for them, communist or not.²⁴

During the Croato-Serb conflicts in 1991 the Serb nationalists and their paramilitary units inflicted terrible damage on Croatian communities and to the Croats particularly in ethnically mixed areas. Killings, expulsions and destruction of Croat homes was the rule and it is assessed that more than 9,000 persons were killed. The economy was in a shambles and practically one-third of Croatia was Serb controlled as the *Republika Srpska Krajina*, consisting mainly of the regions Kordun, Banija, Lika and parts of Slavonija. While these heavy losses and destruction inflicted on Croatia were widely publicized and, therefore, quite well known, much less information got through on persecutions of Serbs by the Croatian militia and forces in 1991, 1993, and 1995. Since the scope of this article does not permit detailed description, these particular cases of war crimes and massive violations of human rights require at least a brief mention in their chronological order:

- (1) Expulsion, killings and devastation in central Slavonija in the autumn of 1991 where some 70,000 people were expelled and 183 predominantly Serb villages were burned down.²⁵
- Scorched-earth policy of the Croatian army in the so-called "Medak pocket" (Lika, September 1993) where 160 homes were destroyed, 190 barns burned to the ground, and large numbers of civilians were murdered.²⁶
- Finally, in the summer of 1995, the Croatian forces, having received an aid and a green light from the US government, inflicted a devastating blow to Krajina Serbs in two separate blitzkriegs: "*Bljesak*" (Flash) in western Slavonija, May 1, and "*Oluja*" (Storm), the rest of Krajina, August 4. Thus the unrecognized Republic of Serbian Krajina ceased to exist. This resulted in huge expulsion and exodus of some 200,000 Serbs from Croatia to Serbia and Bosnia. The Krajina regions were devastated by the scorched-earth policy of the Croatian militia and paramilitary units who continued destruction and pillage for more than a year. It is estimated that 6,000 persons disappeared during the operation "Storm" and 1,000 since, according to the IHF for the Human Rights Office in Zagreb.²⁷

By practically expelling and forcing into exile hundreds of thousands of Serbs, the Croat government accomplished a "final solution" of the Serbian question in Croatia. From 12 percent of the population of Croatia before the civil war, the Serbs have been reduced to 3.1 percent.²⁸ They have become an insignificant and dispersed minority (mainly in urban centers), without political clout, surviving as second-class citizens. What connects the Ustasha genocide and operation

“Storm” is Croatian ultra-nationalism and Serbophobia as a driving force that rationalizes destruction, killing, expulsion, and even forced conversion to Roman Catholicism.²⁹

Conclusions

Although the second largest genocide after the Holocaust during World War II—the Ustasha genocide—in the so-called Independent State of Croatia is nowadays practically a forgotten genocide, especially when judged by the paucity of publications on this subject in the contemporary genocide scholarship, the link undoubtedly exists between the genocide of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies in wartime Croatia (1941–1945) and the civil wars of Yugoslav disintegration (1991–1995). However, this link is far from a simple causality relationship. It is rather to be found through mediations of ideology and the politics of memory, all in the service of the new rising elites out of the chaos of the disintegrating state.

To better understand conceptually the link between Ustasha genocide (1941) and the events in the 1990s, the following factors need to be considered:

- (1) Feeling of threat, fear, insecurity and disorientation on the part of Serbs in Croatia owing to the disintegration of the state, and particularly in view of their traumatic experience of Ustasha genocide.
- (2) The politics of memory, which implied the manipulation of consciousness through mass media in order to revive the memories of genocide of 50 years ago, with the specific purpose of enhancing conflict and justifying the use of force.
- (3) Revival of Ustashism and Chetnikism as the genocidal ideologies of World War II genocides in the Balkans.

Thus the social reality of war and genocide was created by the regional and newly rising elites through dissemination of nationalist and chauvinist ideologies by means of powerful and centrally controlled mass media. In this context the memories of wartime genocide were used as a means to an end. In brief, it was a clear case of manipulation of fears in the service of politics.

In examining the link further, parallels could be drawn between the ideology and the nature of the Ustasha movement and the ethnic nationalism dominating Croatia today. The Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was a totalitarian fascist state headed by a genocidal government. It was also a racist regime headed by “the leader” (*Poglavnik*), embodying all power and authority. Contemporary Croatia is characterized by “constitutional nationalism,”³⁰ with the monopoly of power and mass media in the ruling party (Croatian Democratic Union), with an autocratic but elected leader as supreme arbiter and commander.

Although extensive violence and crimes perpetrated against Croats by the Serbs can neither be condoned nor justified, it helps our understanding to know that the Serbs’ struggle was reactive—reactive to separatism, secession, and to

demotion to second-class status, and above all, to provocations through attacks on life and property.

Finally, the Ustasha genocide of 1941–1945 and the military operation “Storm” (*Oluja*), in 1995, with its predatory and shameful consequences, are connected events. They were stages in the genocidal process of group destruction. Moreover, both were driven by ultra-nationalism and genocidal chauvinism, implementing the ideal of an ethnically pure state, and both were aided by foreign powers.³¹

The worst Serb fears materialized in 1995 when the Croat ultra-nationalists achieved what their Ustasha predecessors failed to accomplish during World War II: a monoethnic “Serbenrein” Croatia. Thus the historical connection between the Ustasha genocide and the start, course and outcome of the Croato-Serb 1991–1995 civil war was established.

Notes and References

1. Although Pavelic left Yugoslavia for emigration in 1929 in order to seek support for his political agenda in Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria, 1931 marked the real formalization of Ustasha organization. That was the year when in Italy under Pavelic's authorship the principles of the organization were codified, such as the statute, program and the Ustasha Main Headquarters (*Ustaski Glavni Stan*), were set up. The expression Ustasha (spelled in Croatian *ustasa*), is sometimes translated as “insurgents,” or as “insurrectionists.” Neither of the two terms is adequate. Although the root of the noun is in the verb “*ustati*”, meaning to get up or to rise, the noun *ustase* (plural form) is just a name for a particular political movement of Croatian chauvinistic anti-Serbian nationalism. *Ustasa* is singular, and *Ustase* is plural, while *ustastvo* (ustashism) is the ideology of Croatian extreme and exclusivist nationalism.
2. The figure is based on data from the German Foreign Affairs service of May, 1941, as quoted in Fikreta Jelic-Butic, *Ustase i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska: 1941–1945* [Ustasha and the Independent State of Croatia: 1941–1945] (Zagreb: Skolska Knjiga, 1978).
3. As with most genocides, the precise number of victims is not known and is therefore still controversial. Thus, the numbers are hotly debated between the revisionists and their adversaries who are prone to deflating or inflating the figures, respectively. The most authoritative sources such as the *Encyclopedia of Holocaust* gives an estimate of a half million victims, and in his statistical study, Dr. Bogoljub Kocovic (1985) insists that no more than 400,000 Serbs were killed in the NDH. There are, however, indications that Serbs' victimization could have been well over a half million. The sources for this estimate can be found in the 30 volumes containing the works of Historical Archives in Karlovac under the editorship of its Director, Dr. Djuro Zatezalo.
4. Particularly notorious were: “The Administrative Rule on Protection of Aryan Blood and Honor of Croatian People” and “The Administrative Rule on Racial Belonging,” both of April 30, 1941, and signed by Pavelic. See Vladimir Dedijer, *Vatikan i Jasenovac: Dokumenti* [Vatican and Jasenovac: Documents] (Belgrade: Rad, 1987), pp 151–155.
5. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), pp 102–105, 120.
6. Sava Bosnitch, “Ethnic, ecclesiastical and racial cleansing in Croatia, 1941–1945,” *The South Slav Journal*, Vol 18, No 1–2, 1997, pp 109–110.
7. An example of a Croatian source is Drago Roksandic, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj* [The Serbs in Croatia] (Zagreb: Vjesnik, 1991), where the writer says literally: “The period between 1941 and 1945 was the most tragic in the history of the Serbian people in Croatia” (p 133). Nowhere is it stated what happened and why it was so tragic. The author is Serb and a professor of history at the University of Zagreb. Included here also could be a widely quoted book by Ivo Banac (Yale University), *The National Question In Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (London, 1984), in which the author skillfully avoids the sensitive topic of Ustasha genocide. Another instance can be found in the essay by historian Eric Danielson: *The Historic Roots of the Recent Balkan Conflict* (The George Washington University, 1996). The author mentions “the Ustasha terror,” “perpetrating atrocities against the Serb population including massacres and deportations” (p 12), without mentioning genocide.
8. For purposes of illustration one can cite the best and the most popular volumes, such as Isidor Walliman and Michael N. Dobkowski, eds, *Genocide and Modern Age* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Frank

- Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Samuel Totten, William Parsons and Israel Charny, eds, *Century of Genocide: Eyewitness Accounts and Critical Views* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997). To these works could be added Israel Charny, ed., *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, Vol I (1988), Vol II (1991).
9. As told by a recent Croatian immigrant to Canada. These short narratives could be supplemented by the personal childhood experience of this writer, still vivid in his memory, of the Ustasha genocide: (1) Father was killed in a genocidal massacre of 373 Serbs in Glina on the night of May 12, 1941. (2) By walking in front of the Orthodox church in Glina on July 29, 1941, heard people shouting inside the church. The next night all these men (at least 700 people), had their throats cut in their own church. The church was then demolished. (3) Saw uncanvassed trucks transporting men to an execution site. The men were lying on the floor like sardines in a tin, and armed soldiers were sitting on the edges. (4) Was converted to Catholicism. (5) Had to be a member of Pavelić's Youth and was taught how to sing Ustasha songs. (6) Visited the mass graves at the actual execution site near Glina in 1946. (7) Saw the transportation of the victims' remains to the common tomb at the Orthodox cemetery. (8) Visited and photographed the mass grave in the 1980s. (9) Met by accident in the 1960s an ex-Ustasha, who had participated in killing the Serbs from Glina. This encounter was followed by a desire for revenge. ... As with other Serbs from Croatia, the only possible reaction in the 1990s, as of any Jewish Holocaust survivor, was: "Never more!" See more in Damir Mirkovic, "Recollections of a forced conversion to Catholicism and of Ustasha genocide," *The South Slav Journal*, Vol 17, No 1-2, 1996, pp 75-85.
 10. See *Ustav SFRY—Ustav SRH* (Zagreb: NIU, Pregled, 1974), p 212.
 11. Traumatization is in essence a psychological experience of injury, a deeply felt disturbing experience producing a repressed emotional reaction.
 12. In the summer of 1990 this writer personally encountered small Serbian groups in Glina (Krajina region), who were obviously worried by their situation in a significantly changed relationship of power.
 13. Eric Markusen and Damir Mirkovic, "Understanding Genocidal Killing in the Former Yugoslavia: Preliminary Observations." Presented to the first meeting of the Association of Genocide Scholars, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, June 14-15, 1995. The above section on traumatization is based on this paper.
 14. In the above-cited paper Markusen and Mirkovic drew the same conclusion. Dr. Helen Fein, the Director of the Institute for the Study of Genocide in New York, and the first President of the AGS, in her review of the Williamsburg Conference said: "Markusen and Mirkovic noted that the World War II genocide of Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia was a predisposing factor (traumatizing the victims and their descendants) but not a cause of genocide in Bosnia." *The ISG Newsletter*, No 14, 1995, p 5.
 15. Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (Toronto: Viking by Penguin, 1998), p 50. See also, by the same author, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys Into the New Nationalism* (Toronto, Viking by Penguin, 1993).
 16. "It is fear that turns minor differences into major, that makes the gulf between ethnicities into a distinction between species, between human and inhuman. And not just fear, but guilt as well. For if you have shared a common life with another group and then suddenly began to fear them, because they suddenly have power over you, you have to overcome the weight of happy memories; you have to project onto *them* the blame for destroying a common life" (Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor*, p 56).
 17. Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway, *Yugoslavia's Ethnic Nightmare* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1995), p 12.
 18. Vladimir Dedijer, *Vatikan i Jasenovac: Dokumenti* (Belgrade: Rad, 1987); Antun Miletić, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac, 1941-1945: Dokumenta*, Vols I-II (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga, 1986); Milan Bulajić, *Ustaski zločini genocida i suđenje Andriji Artukoviću 1986 godine*, Vols I-II (Belgrade: Rad, 1988).
 19. Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen* [Zagreb, 1948] (Belgrade: Nova Knjiga, 1986). Introduction by Jakov Blazevic [pp I-XXIV] (pp I-XXVI plus 1119). The work explores the relationship of the Roman Catholic clergy and Ustasha crimes, and is subtitled: "Half of a Century of Clericalism in Croatia." It is a scholarly work of a competent historian and would merit translation into English.
 20. Among other publications in Croatia noted is the volume edited by Marko Grcic, *Bleiburg*, 2nd expanded edition (Zagreb: Vjesnik, 1990).
 21. Those were not graves in the ordinary meaning of the word, but rather caves in which the victims had been thrown alive, half-dead, or after being killed. A TV program "These Are Our Children," aired from Belgrade in 1991, depicts an excavation of such a pit in Medjugorje, and the burial rites accompanying exhumation of bones. The Croat press was also in 1990 describing and photographing scenes of discovered execution sights containing bones of Croat victims at the end of World War II. These were, indeed, examples of unspoken crimes until 1990.

22. Markusen and Mirkovic: op cit, pp 35–36. A revised and updated version is in press in the USA and Australia.
23. Many of the purged Croat separatists re-surfaced as leaders in the 1990s to spearhead the actual Croat secession.
24. The above-selected quotations are taken from “Vjesnik u Srijedu,” May 10, 1972.
25. See more in Damir Mirkovic, “On destruction and self-destruction of Croatian Serbs: a preliminary draft for a study of genocide,” *The South Slav Journal*, Vol 20, No 1–2, 1999, pp 26–37.
26. The Canadian peacekeepers fought a fierce battle with Croat forces and found 16 bodies of burned civilians; 50 bodies were later returned by the Croats. See David Pugliese, “Canada’s secret battle,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 7, 1996.
27. See Mirkovic, op cit, particularly pp 34–37. Also, Damir Mirkovic, “Croatian operation ‘Storm’, ethnic cleansing and the end of Republika Srpska Krajina,” *The South Slav Journal*, Vol 18, No 1–2, 1997, pp 29–45.
28. This percentage figure is now probably somewhat larger because at the time of calculation (1998), a part of eastern Slavonija was still under Serb control.
29. As is well known, the Ustasha three-prong policy toward the Serbs in Croatia was: killing, expulsion and conversion to Catholicism. Interestingly, the pressure to become Catholic is also felt in the present Croatia. Thus young people in their 20s, born from mixed marriages and never baptized, are nowadays “received” into the Catholic faith through baptism.
30. The expression “constitutional nationalism” is taken from Robert Hayden. See Robert M. Hayden, “Constitutional nationalism in the formerly Yugoslav Republic,” *Slavic Review*, Vol 5, No 4, Winter, 1992.
31. See more on this in Damir Mirkovic: “Croatian liberation of western Slavonia and Krajina,” *Peace Research (The Canadian Journal of Peace Studies)*, Vol 30, No 1, February 1998, pp 14–24.