

OPPOSITION IN CROATIA 1945-1950

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Introduction

There are many works about the history of Croatia in the period after 1945. Most of historians would agree with the statement that 1940's are the most and best analysed period in the second half of the 20th century. The reason for that is mostly the time distance, which is most seriously considered by historians dealing with recent history. Time distance has a number of advantages, such as the slight probability of living participants partakers influencing the researcher with their social power and partiality, but also the researcher's weaker emotional link to the events he participated in. These advantages win over the disadvantages, such as fewer sources and the possibility of direct insight into events or social relations of the times just elapsed. Apart from that, one should not, of course, forget the political reasons, especially in the conditions of the one-party system until 1991, in which the government was always interested in subjecting to criticism the abandoned ruling models and systems of power, rather than to have an equal approach to its own role in the immediate past, which was seen as an opportunity to sing its own praises. Despite the fact that the beginning of the rule of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia/Communist Party of Croatia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije/Komunistička partija Hrvatske - KPJ/KPH) has been researched extensively, and not only by historians, it seems that we are still far from the satisfactory level of research results pertaining to that period, as well as the reconstruction of the events and their interpretation.

I shall give a short contribution to the understanding of the period, in which the KPJ, after the successful end of the liberation and civil war, assumed power with the intention to carry out its revolutionary reorganisation of the society in accordance with Marxist doctrines and by applying the USSR's experience, from the point of view of the destiny of political parties, movements and churches on Croatian territory.

Ustashas and the Independent State of Croatia

The establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatske - NDH) was the result of the Ustasha movement's activ-

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ities. The Ustashas were militant, conservative and traditional nationalists with an emphasised anti-communist tone, whose main purpose to establish a Croatian state was accomplished in the circumstances of the downfall of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was destroyed and divided by the Tripartite Pact forces: the Third Reich, the Kingdom of Italy, Hungary and the Kingdom of Bulgaria.¹ The Ustashas used the results of German and Italian imperialist plans, as well as the desire of a large part of the Croatian nation to have more autonomy, to proclaim the Croatian state upon the attack on Yugoslavia. Apart from the desire of the Croatian nation, and the activities of the Ustasha movement, led by Ante Pavelić, and “divine providence”, the state was also created by the “will of our allies”, and that very fact, apart from the war circumstances, determined to a large extent its internal structure and international position.² One of the logical consequences of the alliance with Italy was the loss of a large part of Croatian territory, which Rome used in an attempt to restore the former Roman Empire. Another consequence of the choice of such allies, who were working to destroy the foundations of the “Versailles Europe”, was a closer ideological tie to German National Socialism, which included racist persecutions of Romany and Jewish minorities. In addition to that, there were regulations against the Serb minority, which was pursuing the restoration of Yugoslavia, and which was considered by the Ustashas to be the worst enemy of the Croatian state. One could say that the chauvinist discrimination or persecution of Serbs was the Ustasha movement’s original solution for the long-term stabilisation of the Croatian state. Quite contrary to such intentions, the Ustasha authorities’ retribution against a part of its population, as well as Croatia’s link with the “new order” forces in the war against the Western democracies and the communist USSR, turned a large part of the population, even those who were not directly threatened, against the NDH.

Communist Party of Yugoslavia

From the beginning of their activities, the Communists were relying on the USSR and waiting for favourable conditions to start their revolution. In accordance with the Marxist ideology of unavoidable class conflict, they wanted to introduce a dictatorship of the proletariat, or rather the dictatorship of the KPJ. They could not come to terms with the occupation, the partitioning of Yugoslavia, the loss of a large part of Croatia, and the repressive policy of the Ustasha authorities. But, the immediate cause for the armed resistance was the attack of the Third Reich on the USSR, which was Germany’s ally since 1939.

¹ See in: Fikreta Jelić Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna država Hrvatska 1941-1945. (Ustashas and the Independent State of Croatia 1941-1945)*, (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber-Školska knjiga, 1978); Aleksa Đilas, *Osporena zemlja. Jugoslavenstvo i revolucija (Contested Country. Yugoslavianism and Revolution)* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1990).

² Petar Požar, ed., *Ustaša. Dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu (Ustasha. Documents on the Ustasha Movement)* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka stvarnost, 1995), p. 133.

The Communists wanted to restore Yugoslavia, but this time as a federation of equal republics. They were dedicated to the National Front (Narodna fronta - NF) programme, which guaranteed a just solution of social and national issues, freedom and equality. In several public statements they claimed that they were not fighting for their dictatorship and radical changes. They also claimed that they would guarantee political pluralism and private property, and that the movement's main aims were people's liberation and people's democracy. In that sense, they published *The Declaration of the Supreme Command of the People's Liberation Army (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska - NOV) and the Partisan Units of Yugoslavia (Partizanski odredi Jugoslavije - POJ) and Anti-fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije - AVNOJ)*, on 8 February 1943, and *The Declaration on the Aims and Principles of the People's Liberation War of the Preparatory Committee of the Land Anti-fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Croatia (Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske - ZAVNOH) and the General Command of the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Units of Croatia (Glavni štab Narodnooslobodilačke vojske i partizanskih odreda Hrvatske - GŠ NOV and POH)* on 26 May 1943.³ But, behind the proclaimed programme, the KPJ was hiding its revolutionary content. Communists were revealing it only gradually. That became more open in 1945, and all of their intentions were uncovered in 1948, during the conflict with Stalin and the Cominform .

Croatian Peasant Party

From the beginning of the war, the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka - HSS), as Croatia's strongest political party, kept both the Ustashas and Communists at distance.⁴ Nevertheless, it should be underlined that both radical wings of Croatia's politics, the Ustasha movement and the KPJ/KPH, were dedicated to some solutions, which were close to the ideas of many HSS followers. Many accepted the Ustashas' dedication to the sovereignty of the Croatian nation in its ethnic and historical territory. With such a decision they actually renounced their leadership and the party. But, although only declaratively, they did not give up the ideology of the Radić brothers. Nevertheless, they melted into the Ustasha movement and shared its destiny – military defeat and emigration. Many of those who stayed were socially marginalized and persecuted, and many others were killed. Although the HSS leadership nurtured the idea of an independent Croatian state, it refused

³ Hodimir Sirotković, ed., *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske, Zbornik dokumenata 1943. (Land Anti-fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Croatia, 1943)* (Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta, 1964), p. 132.

⁴ See in: Ljubo Boban, *Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije (Controversies from the Yugoslav History)*, volumes. 1 and 2 (Zagreb: Stvarnost and Školska knjiga, 1989); Fikreta Jelić Butić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka (Croatian Peasant Party)* (Zagreb: Globus, 1983); Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.-1950. (Croatian Peasant Party 1941-1950)* (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 1996).



The People's Republic of Croatia in 1947. Contemporary map.

co-operation with the Ustasha authorities and their radical policy, as well as the alliance with the Axis states. The basis of Vlado Maček's policy was to keep the HSS uncompromised, so that it could be re-activated in a favourable moment and continue its work aimed at strengthening, and possibly expanding, the Autonomous Banovina of Croatia conceived in 1939.

The HSS was distanced in a similar way from the illegal KPJ and the partisan movement, in which the KPJ imposed its monopoly. The leadership knew that the KPJ would instrumentalise the liberation war in its struggle for power, but many party members saw their joining with the partisan movement as the only remaining solution in their resistance against Ustasha policy and foreign occupation.

That very ability of the KPJ to present the HSS and the NF programmes as overlapping programmes influenced the decision of many HSS members to join the partisans. The KPJ policy towards the HSS may be reduced to three crucial points: 1) to draw as many HSS members as possible to the partisans, so that the People's Liberation Movement (Narodnooslobodilački pokret - NOP) could have a larger number of Croats; 2) to discard Maček and the HSS leadership under the pretext of their treason; 3) to impose a

new leadership on the party, which would be used by the Communists in their struggle for power and serve to the proclaimed JNOF (Jedinstvena narodnooslobodilačka fronta) programme, in fact the disguised KPJ programme. Everything depended on the need to have as many Croats as possible joining partisans in order to win the war and gain international recognition of the new Yugoslavia under Communist rule.

Of course, those HSS members who joined the partisans renounced the HSS leadership and Maček. But unlike the first group which joined the Ustashas, this group formed a new leadership, the so-called Executive Committee of the Croatian Peasant Party (Izvršni odbor Hrvatske seljačke stranke - IO HSS) – after June 1945 the Executive Committee of the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (Izvršni odbor Hrvatske republikanske seljačke stranke - IO HRSS) – and declared itself as the real representative of the HSS. They invoked the original party's principles, which were, in their view, betrayed by Maček.

Regarding the fact that many HSS followers joined either the Ustashas or the partisans, and that the West – the allied major powers in the war against the Third Reich and the Kingdom of Italy, and the rivals of the Communist USSR, representatives of the East – made its support conditional on an active fight against Germans, the Peasant Party tried to re-activate itself at the end of the war. The HSS leadership abandoned the wait-and-see policy in the attempt to eliminate the risk of having the Communists as the only war winners in Croatia. It was clear that they had to take the initiative so that the HSS could regain its pre-war position as Croatia's strongest political party. Various combinations, which in 1943 and 1944 included contacts with both Ustashas and Communists, had the ultimate aim to outwit both movements and restore the HSS to power. But the leeway for independent actions had already been taken. As the following developments showed, in the war environment, only active policy and force could prevail.

The different war destinies of the HSS leaders and their different political estimates contributed to the non-homogeneity and inconsistency of HSS policy. During the war, Maček was the Ustashas' captive under their close surveillance. The detaining of Augustin Košutić, the Party's Vice-President, in late 1944, and the news of partisan terror against "the traitors", was a clear message to Maček, who had for a long time been carrying the partisan label of traitor. That was referred to in *Vjesnik, glasilo Jedinstvene narodnooslobodilačke fronte Hrvatske* (*Paper of the Unitary People's Liberation Front of Croatia*), and soon the traitor Executive Committee of the HRSS was also analysing that thesis. The Committee knew they had to leave Croatia before the partisans arrived in Zagreb, and they emigrated together with the Ustasha leadership.⁵

⁵ *Vjesnik*, 26 Feb. 1944, "Put Mačeka - put izdaje" ("Maček's Way - Way of Treason"); *Slobodni dom*, 8 Mar. 1944, "Svim pristašama Hrvatske Seljačke Stranke" ("To all followers of the Croatian Peasant Party").

Maček did not have the possibility to influence HSS policy from abroad, except for sending secret messages in which he advised the HSS not to participate in the elections for the Constituent Assembly of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija - FNRJ) in November 1945. He opposed the legalisation of the party, as it would mean the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of Communist power. Apart from that, he counted on the conflict between the East and the West soon, which would enable the HSS to restore its power. In his interview in the *New York Times*, on 23 July 1945, Maček referred to the dictatorship of the Communist regime.⁶ He sent a clear message to Šubašić and Juraj Šutej, members of the Yugoslav government with a Communist majority, that he was not supporting them, especially because he thought that the new regime in Croatia saw the HSS as its worst enemy.

Košutić had some more leeway than Maček, as he was free most of the time. But when the Vokić-Lorković putsch failed, wishing to evade Pavelić's manipulations, and having well assessed the final results of the war, he wanted to negotiate with the Communists.⁷ But they imprisoned him soon, in November 1944, after a similar attempt of Božidar Magovac, a respectable HSS member, to win an equal position for the HSS and limit the monopoly of the KPJ in the partisan movement had been prevented in the spring and summer of that same year. Having faced the KPJ's dictatorial intentions, Košutić returned to the Party's original position: the wait-and-see policy. That in fact was Maček's policy. As he was still kept in detention after the war, Košutić strongly influenced the Party's policy through his wife Mira Košutić, Stjepan Radić's daughter, and *Narodni glas* (*People's Voice*), the HSS party paper. He opposed the legalisation of the party, and especially participation in the elections for the Constituent Assembly of FNRJ, or any other activity. Namely, like Maček, he was convinced in the conflict between the communist East and the democratic West, and was counting on the return of the HSS after the victory of the West.

Ivan Šubašić, Vice-Roy of the Autonomous Banovina of Croatia, had a special position among HSS leaders. Having been chosen by the British as the man for the uniting of all South-Slavic forces in the fight against the Germans, he was supposed to be an obstacle to Communist predominance. Britain imposed him on the King and the Greater-Serbian forces, and on the partisans as well.⁸ Britain believed that the Tito-Šubašić agreement preserved the interests of the Yugoslav Monarchy and prevented the absolute

⁶ *New York Times*, 23 July 1945, "Maček prophesies Tito's dictatorship. Claims that the Yugoslav Communist Regime is certain, but Croats will resist it" ("Maček prorokuje diktaturu Tita. Izjavljuje da je u Jugoslaviji komunistički režim siguran, ali Hrvati će se tome oduprijeti). See Dinko Šuljak, *Tražio sam Radićevu Hrvatsku (I Sought Radić's Croatia)* (Barcelona - Munich: Library of *Hrvatska revija*, 1988), p. 409.

⁷ Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.-1950. (Croatian Peasant Party 1941-1950)*, p. 28.

⁸ On I. Šubašić's Activities in Dragovan ŠEPIĆ, *Vlada Ivana Šubašića (Ivan Šubašić's Government)* (Zagreb: Globus, 1983).

prevalence of the KPJ. Šubašić was the only HSS politician with a tolerable level of equality with the KPJ, at least in the formal sense. He participated in the coalition Communist-Royal government as the Foreign Minister, but the state policy was fully controlled by the Communists. Unlike Košutić and Šutej, he had a more compromise-prone policy. He wanted the HSS and HRSS to unite and stand for the elections, but within the NF.

Šutej found himself in the same position as Šubašić. He too was a member of the temporary government, but unlike Šubašić, he was in favour of a more determined policy. He insisted on resignations from the minister positions in the Communist government, but was in favour of the legalisation of the Party and the Party's independent stand for the elections.

Full predominance of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia

The situation in the post-war Croatia was determined by the following facts: 1) the war between 1941 and 1945, and the associated human casualties and devastations; 2) the activities of the remaining Ustasha and some Chetnik forces after the war; 3) the collapse of the NDH and the restoration of Yugoslavia; 4) the power of the KPJ, which enforced its dictatorship; 5) Yugoslavia's alliance with the USSR, which pushed back the influence of France, Great Britain and the United States of America, and the total discontinuation of the Italian and German influence; 6) the expectation of the conflict between the communist East and the democratic West; 7) radical territorial changes: in those changes, when compared with the situation in 1939, Croatia lost parts of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian territory and Srijem, and gained parts of its ethnic or historical territories, i.e. Baranja and Dvor na Uni, as well as Cres, Lastovo, Lošinj, Rijeka, Zadar and Istria; 8) the special position of Istria, which until 1947 was under military rule, when annexed to Croatia (Buje, Novigrad and Umag were annexed to Croatia in 1954).

The KPJ fully dominated the important institutions, the partisan movement and the post-war government. The leader in the fight against the opposition was the Yugoslav intelligence, security and secret service called Department for the Protection of People (Odjeljenje zaštite naroda - OZN). It was founded to prevent any opposition activities against the Communist rule, both political and armed. OZNA was re-organised in March 1946, when the second OZNA section in charge of the organising of counter-intelligence network in the areas under partisan rule, evolved into the State Security Administration (Uprava državne bezbjednosti - UDB), and was transferred from the Ministry of People's Defence into the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as an autonomous department. Within the Yugoslav Army (Jugoslavenska armija - JA), the Counter-Intelligence Service (Kontraobavještajna služba - KOS) was formed from the third OZNA section.

The same reasons for which Tito founded OZNA, made him found the People's Defence Corps of Yugoslavia (Korpus narodne obrane Jugoslavije - KNOJ). Its task was to destroy "the enemies of the revolution", to "clean" the partisan territory from "the gangs", and to execute orders issued by OZNA.

In simple words, *KNOJ* was executing operations planned by *OZNA*. By the end of 1945, *KNOJ* had 120,000 soldiers.

OZNA was functioning as a Party and a state organ in harmony with the unity of the Party and state authority. All *OZNA* members were KPJ members as well. *OZNA* was in the forefront of the covered-up revolution carried out by Communists until 1947/1948. Communists were carrying out the disguised revolution, hiding behind countless accusations against their opponents' and wealthy citizens' alleged co-operation with the occupying forces and their collaborators, by use of staged judicial proceedings, courts for the protection of national honour, military and civil courts, as well as currency reform, confiscation of property and seizure of war profits.

Unlike those measures, open revolutionary actions were not hidden behind the accusations of enemy activities, but were rather the consequence of the KPJ's decisiveness to reorganise society on new foundations, in line with the Communist vision. In terms of agriculture, this meant first of all a thorough agrarian reform and distribution of land to peasants in August 1945, and after the conflict with the Cominform – with the attempted collectivisation through the introduction of collective farms. With the nationalisation in December 1946 and April 1948, the private sector in industry and related trades was almost completely abolished. The purpose of UDBA was to hinder not only the real enemies, but also all potential opponents, who might present an obstacle to the KPJ.

Formal compromises of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia

But the full predominance of the KPJ was threatened by the pressure of the Allies, who insisted on the agreement with the royal government of Ivan Šubašić. Josip Broz Tito agreed to found a joint government consisting of the members of the National Liberation Committee of Yugoslavia (Nacionalni komitet oslobođenja Jugoslavije - NKOJ) and the royal government, on 7 March 1945, which included royal governors, the expansion of the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), and elections three months after the end of the war. Although the Communists accepted most of the requests, in practice, it was boiled down to formalities, which did not jeopardise the realisation of the KPJ's will. One can say that the Communists saved their dictatorship with those compromises, and then confirmed it by formal parliamentary means.

The disunited Allies did not have the strength to remind KPJ of the obligations taken and the promises of democracy. At the Potsdam Conference (17 July to 2 August 1945), Churchill put pressure on Stalin and Truman, reminding them that the decisions from the Yalta Conference (4–11 February 1945), where the major forces recognised the continuity of Yugoslavia, were not being carried out coherently, especially in relation to personal liberties, freedom of worship, speech, press, assembly and association, the right to property and private initiative, and the fact that free elections had not been held. Stalin stood against him, while Truman remained neutral. No decision

was made and the Potsdam Conference was nothing but disappointment to the opposition in Yugoslavia.

Nevertheless, the elections for the Constituent Assembly of FNRJ were held on 11 November 1945 and were supposed to be a crucial moment for the future of democracy and the system of government in Yugoslavia. Therefore, all political activities of the KPJ and the bourgeois opposition were concentrated in that direction.

HSS members in the Temporary People's Assembly (7 – 26 August 1945)

During the Congress of National Front of Yugoslavia (Narodna fronta Jugoslavije - NFJ) in August 1945, AVNOJ was finally broadened with the so-called undiscredited members of the pre-war National Assembly of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. But, the recommendation from the Yalta Conference on broadening AVNOJ with undiscredited members of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was modified. According to the interpretation that the National Assembly was elected in 1938 under non-democratic circumstances - which was not mentioned in Yalta - a conclusion was made on the broadening of AVNOJ not only with a certain number of pre-war members, but also with members of the existing political parties and groups, and the prominent public persons and persons from cultural circles, and all that in order to have as many Communist sympathisers as possible.

The Temporary People's Assembly (7 – 26 August 1945) included twenty-six representatives on behalf of the HSS, who together with the old AVNOJ members from the HRSS, made a group of thirty-seven. Out of the twenty-six newlyelected members, half of them belonged to the HSS group around Šubašić, and the rest of them were nominated by the HRSS.

Croatian Republican Peasant's Party

After the Communists assumed power in 1945, the Executive Committee of the HRSS participated in the government, under KPJ supervision. By doing that, they knowingly gave up their Party's autonomy. The HRSS was turned into the KPJ's instrument in the elimination of the HSS, as well as the elimination of pluralism and the multi-party parliamentary system.

The HRSS served the Communists, as proof of a multi-party system and democracy, and that there was no KPJ dictatorship. At the same time, the pro-Communist HRSS was supposed to channel HSS followers and their aspirations for the party's restoration. Therefore, the Communists used the HRSS for the purposes of the pre-election for the Constituent Assembly of FNRJ in 1945, as well as for the Constituent Assembly of the People's Republic of Croatia (Narodna Republika Hrvatska - NRH) in 1946. In short, the Communist authorities were supporting the HRSS, whose public support was very weak, as long as they needed it to become strong enough by

creating a repressive apparatus, and to obtain full international recognition. After that, the HRSS was discarded and put down.

Šubašić, HSS and HRSS

Šubašić found himself between the HSS and the HRSS. He thought the best solution would be to unite the two, and to have Maček resign. Soon, talks started with the HRSS leadership on the unification of the parties. The representatives of the HSS and the HRSS were supposed to appear together at the Temporary People's Assembly, and then the two parties would unite. Despite the unacceptable conditions, the talks continued until September 1945. Namely, the IO HRSS, almost certainly prompted by the Communists, was exclusivist in the talks with HSS leaders. Instead of unification, they proposed that HSS members join the HRSS, naturally under the criteria defined by the IO HRSS. In that way, the destiny of the HSS would, of course, have come into the hands of the KPJ leadership. Apart from that, the IO HRSS demanded that HSS followers join the NF instantly. It was clear that the KPJ and its people in the IO HRSS wanted to prevent the revival of the HSS, in fact, to dissolve it and replace it by the HRSS, which was in fact a Communist Party for Croatian peasants.

Only HSS representatives in AVNOJ, who by that very fact expressed their willingness to co-operate even in a discriminated position, supported Šubašić. Šubašić's idea was formally equal to the one of the HRSS, or the KPJ, and he saw the united HSS joining the NF as an "association of parties". He believed that in time there would be only two parties left: a peasant party – the HSS, and a labour party – the KPJ. But Tito explained to him that the NF would be an "association of individuals", rather than political parties.⁹ Of course, Šubašić did not know what that meant, and the only possible meaning was the melting away of all parties in the NF, except, of course, the leading KPJ.

Many public statements about democracy and freedom, given by the Communists during the war and the post-war period, as well as the negotiations under the supervision of Great Britain, were denied by the Communists themselves;¹⁰ not only with their actions, but also in many statements. Namely, although Tito publicly rejected the accusations of the creation of a single-party system, at the same time he said that the restoration of the old parties was out of question. Besides, the fact that he was the General Secretary of the KPJ, President of the Government and the Supreme Commander of the JA, as well as the President of the NFJ, confirmed that conclusion.

⁹ On the NF, see Katarina Spehnyak, *Javnost i propaganda. Narodna fronta u politici i kulturi Hrvatske 1945.-1952. (Public and Propaganda)* (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 2002).

¹⁰ See Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, *Stranački pluralizam ili monizam (Party Pluralism and Monism)* (Ljubljana: *Tribuna*, special edition, 27 November 1987).

Conference of Croatian Peasant Party leaders at the Esplanade Hotel in Zagreb

The failure of the negotiations on the unification of the HSS and the HRSS motivated Šubašić to clarify the relations with HSS leaders and to summon a party conference in Zagreb. The conference was to define the party's further actions. It was held at the *Esplanade* Hotel in Zagreb on 2 September 1945.¹¹

Šubašić issued three requests to the participants: to unite the HSS and the HRSS, to join the united HSS with the NF, and to stand for the elections. The participants present were appalled at the fact that he did not even mention Maček and his escape out of fear of persecution; he did not mention that Košutić was imprisoned without a court decision and that many party members were victims of the regime, even those who had been trying to co-operate with the regime. Many conference participants held Šubašić responsible because, as a member of the government, he had not prevented the violence of the regime. They demanded his resignation unless he could influence the change of the situation.

In fact, two opposing views were manifested there. The majority was in favour of Šubašić and Šutej's resignation from their positions in the government and opposed the idea of standing for the elections together with the HRSS, and even less as a part of the NF. They strongly advised that the HSS should go into opposition. Only a minority was in favour of co-operation with the NF. But Šutej offered a compromise solution and requested that Šubašić visit Maček in Paris, obtain Košutić's opinion on recent events and get him out of prison.

Nevertheless, the KPJ's assessment was that Košutić's release from prison before the elections for the Constituent Assembly might jeopardise their plans for the elimination of the HSS, and thus Košutić's release was made conditional on some compromises. He was almost certainly requested to link the party with the NF or, possibly, to withdraw from politics. Košutić obviously did not accept the ultimatum, and was kept in detention for two years without judicial proceedings.

Šubašić's and Šutej's resignations

Šubašić was supported by a few like-minded individuals, especially those who were occupying positions in Belgrade and who were representatives in the Temporary People's Assembly (Franjo Gaži, Tomo Jančiković). But he accepted the decision that he had to go to Paris to meet Maček and inform him on the difficult situation. Although in fear of causing additional repression and Yugoslavia's full turning to the USSR, the British let Šubašić use an airplane.

¹¹ For more see Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.-1950. (Croatian Peasant Party 1941-1950)*, pp. 54-60; Z. Radelić, "Konferencija prvaka HSS-a u hotelu Esplanade u Zagrebu 1945." ("Conference of HSS Leaders at the Esplanade Hotel in Zagreb 1945"), *Časopis za suvremenu povijest (in further text: ČSP)* 25 (1993), No. 2-3: 149-164.

But, the day before the flight, on 10 September 1945, the Vice-President of the Government, Edvard Kardelj, notified Šubašić that the authorities would not let him leave the country. In the evening that day, Šubašić had a brain stroke.

Within a month or two, Šubašić suffered several very difficult blows: in August 1945, the world's major forces at the Potsdam Conference failed to put a pressure on the KPJ in order to fully implement the Tito-Šubašić Agreement; King Petar II Karađorđević denied the governor the right of representation; Milan Grol, Vice-President of the Government resigned; the leaders of the Serbian bourgeois in emigration were planning to send a memorandum condemning the Yugoslav government's policy to the Conference of foreign ministers in London, in September 1945; and the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia published the Shepherd's Letter containing serious accusations due to the persecutions of the Catholic Church (Katolička crkva - KC). Aware that he was left without anyone's support and persuaded by Šutej, they both resigned on 8 October 1945.

A strong American and British reaction was missing. They were afraid of causing the Communist regime's counter-reaction and totally leave Yugoslavia to the USSR's sphere of interest. Therefore, on 6 November 1945, weakly worded notes were sent expressing disapproval of the breach of the Agreement. After the elections, on 17 November 1945, Tito's response followed. He rejected the objections, claiming that all the items of the Agreement were fulfilled. He clearly made known that after the resignations and the electoral victory of the NF, "the allied governments were released from their obligations they considered to have towards the people of Yugoslavia".¹²

The group gathered around *Narodni glas*

The Party leaders gathered around Mira Košutić were enforcing the policy of Vice-President Košutić, who was requesting the Party's full freedom in its actions. The public was informed of that standpoint through the party paper *Narodni glas* (*People's Voice*). *Narodni glas čovječnosti, pravice i slobode* (*People's Voice of Humaneness, Justice and Freedom*) was the result of the work of the group around Mira Košutić and Marija Radić, the publisher, and the managing editor and editor-in-chief, Ivan Bernardić. Apart from illegal leaflets, it was the only source of information in Croatia not under regime control. The first and the only issue of *Narodni glas* were printed on 20 October 1945.¹³

The distribution of the first issue was prohibited based on the accusation of haranguing the accomplishments of the People's Liberation War, causing national hatred and advocating the enemy's activities. As Bernardić continued to work on the second issue, the Communist authorities used illegal means putting pressure on the printing workers in order to hinder the paper's pub-

¹² Željko Krušelj and Jera Vodušek Starič, ed., "Jugoslavija u britanskim izvještajima 1945-50" ("Yugoslavia in British Reports 1945-50"), *Danas*, 23 May 1989.

¹³ Find more in Zdenko Radelić, "Narodni glas - glas oporbe 1945." ("People's Voice - Opposition Voice") *ČSP* 26 (1994), No. 2: 299-315.

lishing. Thus, according to *Vjesnik*, the workers of the People's Printing House refused to print *Narodni glas* because it was "reactionary". After 22 August 1945, when a group of young Communists broke into Radić's bookstore on Jurišićeva Street, which was a gathering point of Mira Košutić's group, and smashed pictures of Radić and Maček, a bomb exploded on 13 November 1945 in front of the bookstore and served as a serious enough warning. The editorial staff had to give up further issuing of *Narodni glas*.

Narodni glas defined free activities as the main precondition for the functioning of the HSS. The paper rejected the regime's claim that Radić's programme was realised under KPJ leadership, and denounced the HRSS's subservience to the KPJ. It openly stated that the KPJ had introduced dictatorship and that it was persecuting its political opponents falsely accusing them of being fascists. The paper also underlined that there were no personal liberties, freedom of private property, and that federal units, Croatia being one of them, did not have any actual competences. Finally, having warned the readers that the people's free will would not be expressed in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, *Narodni glas* called for abstention.

Croatian Peasant's Party and the elections

The elections were held on 11 November 1945, and the government's response to the opposition parties' boycott was the introduction of ballot-boxes without a list. That was to provide the constituency with the possibility to choose and to ensure democratic rules, and at the same time, to guarantee secrecy in voting. The NF won a landslide victory, with about 90 % of votes out of 90 % of voters who went to the polls. The official results are of course disputable, having in mind the circumstances in which the elections were held. The election campaign was totally in the hands of the KPJ, which controlled trade unions, state-owned companies, the press and radio. Besides, the organisation of polling stations, election boards, voting lists and vote counting were in its hands. The opposition could not control vote counting. In many regions people were forced to go to the polls, but at the same time secrecy in voting was not guaranteed. The army and other governmental representatives threatened those who did not want to go the polls, in some cases even with death. The boxes without a list were called "the Ustasha boxes" or "the black boxes". Many boxes had narrow openings so that the rubber balls could be heard falling into them. In some cases, the balls were moved from the box without a list to the NF box.

Dispute concerning the registration of the HSS

At the time of the elections and afterwards, the fundamental question for the HSS was whether to register the party or not. According to the *Law on associating, gathering and other public meetings* of 25 August 1945, the parties intending to renew their activities had to register. There were two ways to register a party: by the declaration on joining the NF or by submitting

the request, programme and statute of the party to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹⁴

Due to the opposing concepts of the party's policy, another party conference was summoned, which was held at the Priests' Home in Palmotićeveva Street in Zagreb on 15 November 1945. The participants were supposed to make a decision on whether to register the party or not. The majority was in favour of registering because they considered legalisation to be crucial for public work in politics, and that it would also facilitate contacts with foreign diplomats. Besides, the government might identify the HSS with the Ustasas and Chetniks, because of its illegal functioning. Those who opposed legalisation were saying that only Košutić and Maček could decide on such an important issue. The final conclusion was to ask Vice-President Košutić for his opinion on the matter. Shortly thereafter, Košutić sent them a secret letter in which he was decisively against the registering of the HSS.

Relations with Serbian and Slovenian oppositions

At the time of the Temporary People's Assembly in August 1945, many representatives of Yugoslav opposition parties were pursuing their joint action. The HSS representatives favoured the idea of co-operation among the peasant parties (HRSS, HSS, People's Peasant Party and Farmers' Federation). There were two proposals: to establish a Peasant-Socialist Bloc (HSS, Farmers' Federation and Socialist Party) or Peasant-Democratic Bloc (HSS, Democratic Party, Radical Party, Slovene People's Party, Socialist Party and Farmers' Federation), outside the NF. In spring 1946, an initiative was launched for the founding of the Peasant Representatives' Club at the People's Assembly of FNRJ, or rather the Peasant Bloc. In May 1946, such schemes also included Imro Filaković, an HRSS representative, and Father Ante Salacan, as a so-called independent representative in the NF. Dissatisfied with the IO HRSS policy, they were looking for contacts with the HSS group around Šubašić and Šutej. But, unexpectedly, none of the other HRSS representatives wanted to sign the declaration on joining the Peasant Club.

In July 1946, at the time of the FNRJ People's Assembly session, Imro Filaković, Father Salacan and Dragoljub Jovanović and his People's Peasant Party restored the idea of establishing the Peasant Club and the Peasant Bloc (HSS, Peasant Party, Peoples Peasant Party, Farmers' Federation, Slovene People's Party and a group of peasant representatives from Macedonia). But, nothing came of that due to the disunity within the parties and Communist repression. Nevertheless, occasional contacts among party leaders were being maintained until the beginning of 1947. Opposition actions in the

¹⁴ See in Momčilo Pavlović, "Politički programi Demokratske, Narodne radikalne, Jugoslovenske republikanske demokratske, Socijalističke i Socijal-demokratske stranke Jugoslavije iz 1945. godine" ("Political Programmes of the Democratic, National Radical, Yugoslav Republican Democratic, Socialist, an Social-Democratic Parties in Yugoslavia, in 1945") *Istorija XX veka* (Belgrade: 1985), No. 1: 119-155.

People's Assembly were reduced to occasional discussions of individuals who had some courage to speak against the draft laws. The last appearance of that kind was the one of Filaković, who was expelled from the HRSS in 1946, after his protest against the re-introduction of boxes without a list in January 1950.¹⁵

Maček's message

Maček was communicating with the HSS in the country through his secret channels. In spring 1946, Šutej made a written report, which was sent to Maček in Paris, through the French consul or American vice-consul in Zagreb. In July 1946, Gaži sent a verbal message to Maček, with the consent of Jančiković and Šutej, through an official of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He warned him that the HSS had to be reactivated as soon as possible, as time was not on the Party's side. He also said that the HSS could not function with its leadership abroad and in prison. He requested Maček's consent for the establishing of a new temporary HSS leadership.

Finally, in July and September 1946, Maček's replies arrived. He sent word that the HSS should not be registered and that the party should not co-operate with the KPJ, either within or outside the NF. He also said that the party should be linked with other peasant parties in the country, in a future peasant bloc. He was encouraging his party colleagues, saying that that situation was only temporary and that the USA and Great Britain would support the democratic forces.

August Košutić's releasment from prison

The Communist government controlled all those contacts because some leading HSS people were collaborating with OZNA, even those who were very close to Maček. OZNA knew of the attempts made by Šutej, Gaži and Jančiković to activate the Party. It also knew, of course, of Košutić's opinion related to the elections. As the 1946 elections for the Constituent Assembly of the NRH were approaching, there appeared the risk that Šutej's concept would prevail and that the HSS would stand for the elections. It was decided that Košutić would be released from prison. When he was pursuing an active policy, OZNA was afraid of his influence, now, to the contrary, his return to the wait-and-see policy of expecting some favourable international circumstances was suitable to them.

Immediately after his release on 6 September 1946, he took over the leadership of the Party. Šutej convinced him that the registration of the party was necessary because that was the only way to gather party leaders, act against the NF and stand for the elections for the Constituent Assembly. But Košutić remained true to his and Maček's position of not registering the

¹⁵ Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.-1950.*, pp. 178-182.; Z. Radelić, *Izvršni odbor Hrvatske republikanske seljačke stranke i njegovi otpadnici (1945.-1948.)* (Executive Committee of the Croatian Republican Peasant Party and Its Recreants), *ČSP* 24 (1992), No. 2: 59-81, 64.



August Košutić

party and not organizing any political activities, because they would provoke repression. He believed that time was on their side and that, in time, the Croatian people would stand by the side of the HSS.

Božidar Magovac and his concept of HSS policy

Magovac justified his joining the partisans not only with the necessity of fight against the Ustasha regime and the occupiers, but also with the attempt to prevent the risk of the KPJ assuming unlimited power by means of the liberation war.¹⁶ He wanted to win an equal position for the HSS through his participation in the partisan movement. But, contrary to his original intentions, he facilitated the creation of a new party leadership, which had pretensions to take the HSS into its hands, in fact, into the hands of the KPJ.

Magovac managed for some time to resist the pressure to establish a new leadership and to accuse Maček of treason, but even when he publicly discarded Maček, he insisted on the autonomy of the IO HSS. Partnership within the partisan movement was unacceptable to the KPJ, and in the spring and summer of 1944 Magovac was relieved from all of his party and statesman's duties, such as the position of Vice-President of NKOJ.

Nevertheless, despite the bitter experience, he decided to engage in politics again after the war. He thought the KPJ would be forced to accept his cooperation in order to get support from the Croatian people, with his own and Šubašić's help. In such way, he believed, the KPJ would solve a very difficult political and economic situation in the country, which was a result of the ravag-

¹⁶ On B. Magovac see in Zdenko Radelić, *Božidar Magovac, S Radićem između Mačeka i Hebranga (Božidar Magovac, With Radić Between Maček and Hebrang)* (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, Dom i svijet, 1999).



*Božidar Magovac in 1943.
Drawing by Božidar Jakac.*

es of war, but also of the revolutionary terror and radical economic reforms. He was convinced that the war between the West and the USSR was unavoidable, and, for that reason, it was absolutely necessary to have the HSS in power, apart from the Communists, in those decisive moments. He was counting on the victory of the USA and Great Britain. His idea was to take power with Šubašić's help and then give it over to Maček. Of course, constant calls of the HSS leadership to follow him were not the consequence of his faithfulness to Maček, but rather of the assessment that the President of the Party enjoyed a high reputation among Croats. In 1943 and 1946, outside and regardless of the party, Magovac saw himself as the forerunner of the HSS leadership. After Šubašić's passivity, beginning in the summer of 1946, the two of them had meetings at least once a month. Magovac was convinced that the two of them, as sincere partisan allies, would be the most acceptable persons for co-operation.

Dissatisfied with HSS policy, Magovac insisted on the renewal of talks with the KPJ, and that this time, unlike the elections for the Constituent Assembly of FNRJ, the HSS should stand for the elections for the Constituent Assembly of the NRH. But, instead of the whole party's candidacy, which was unacceptable to the KPJ, only the party's most prominent individuals should run for the elections. To that aim, on 5 October 1946, Magovac drafted a special document under the working title *Nacrt (Draft)*, in which he presented his basic propositions. Its essence was the request that the KPJ should acknowledge the right to change the law in the "parliamentary-democratic" way, in order to avoid a civil war, as implicitly said. In the end, he openly requested that the constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties be respected.¹⁷ Košutić accepted the *Draft*, considering that the possible success of Magovac and Šubašić might be useful

¹⁷ Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti (Croatian academy of sciences and arts), Archive, RO B. Magovac, XI.

to the HSS as well, but he insisted that the HSS was not to be involved in it. In October 1946, Šubašić took Magovac's Draft to Bakarić and Krajačić, members of the Croatian Government and *Politburo* of the Central Committee (Centralni komitet - CK) of the KPH. They firmly rejected the proposal to allow non-Communists to stand for the elections.

Moreover, the Communist leaders became anxious about the opposition activities of the HSS and their ambitions. A CK KPJ session was summoned in early 1947. It was decided that more severe measures would be taken against them. The decision was followed by arrests and judicial proceedings against active HSS members, such as Tomo Baburić, Franjo Gaži, Tomo Jančiković, Andrija Papo, Andrija Pavlič, Ivan Štefanec, Dr. Karlo Žunjević and a large group of students, all HSS members.

That did not demoralise Magovac or Šubašić. When the *Draft* failed, they started another initiative in July 1947. They wanted to suggest for the KPJ to appoint Šubašić "the President of the Presidium" of the Parliament or "the Prime-Minister of Croatia", and Magovac a minister in the federal government. They intended to issue some other requests to the Communists, such as announcement of political amnesty, abolition of the death penalty, discontinuation of state violence and free elections. Košutić again accepted Magovac's initiative, although in this case, as well as in 1946, he was emphasising that Magovac and Šubašić were doing it on their own behalf only, and not on behalf of the HSS. He still believed that the HSS had to boycott the regime and wait for the intervention of the West. But Magovac was arrested in August 1947, bringing an end to his political activities.

The government's decisive actions put an end to all oppositional activities in the country, despite the fact that there were some short-term indications that the situation arisen from the Cominform Resolution (1948) would facilitate the liberalisation of the Communist regime, especially in relation to the new elections for the People's Assembly of the FNRJ and NRH Parliament (Sabor) in 1950, and also in 1951, when the police found out that Šutej, with Šubašić's assistance, was drafting a memorandum on the situation in the country for the representatives of the Western countries.¹⁸

The Communist authorities occasionally arrested HSS leaders, and many of them, like Šubašić and Šutej, were under close police supervision, being followed and tapped. Thus, the KPJ, in numerous judicial proceedings and other forms of repression in 1947 and 1948, totally destroyed the HSS in the country. The belief of its officials that a moderate and passive policy would bring about results proved to be wrong, at least for several decades to come.

Catholic Church

After the victory in the liberation and civil war, and its assuming power, the KPJ's ambition was to assume total control over political life. In Croatia,

¹⁸ Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archives) (in further text: HDA), MUP, 010-37, box 15, Dr. Juraj Šutej.

apart from the HSS and other parties, armed resistance of the Crusaders and some Chetniks, the KPJ saw the Catholic Church as a possible gathering point of oppositional political forces and the strongest ideological opponent. As the KPJ wanted to control all aspects of life and influence the population's worldview, it considered religion to be an unscientific world view and an illusion, which caused man's alienation and hindered his full engagement in the creation of the new society. Apart from that, Communists were convinced that in a multi-national state churches and religions provided fertile ground for hatred among nations. As it was dealing with a church, a non-political institution with an enormous influence on people, the regime could not expose it to the usual prohibitions, and even less abolish it. Freedom of worship, and the international situation as well, had to be accounted for. For that very reason, Communists often accused the Catholic Church of co-operating with enemy authorities and of being a class-enemy, abusing religious feelings and jeopardising the people's government. A thousand-year-old policy of the Catholic Church under the slogan "Caesar's to Caesar, and God's to God", which had also been applied in the NDH, proved to be an excellent excuse for exposing the Church to the KPJ's will, by ceaseless new accusations stemming from the previous war. Because of the KC's unwillingness to follow Communist demands, Tito instigated the state apparatus into adding new accusations, concerning the support to the Crusade movement after the war, to the previously existing accusations of co-operation with the Ustasas during the war.

The fight against the Catholic Church was unscrupulous. The freedom of the priests' activities was limited, and the credulity of some priests in their contacts with the Crusaders made the work of UDBA easier. On the other hand, many priests were avoiding such contacts, and UDBA was using the former Crusaders and its agents to set up cases. The authorities were especially interested in compromising Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac, in order to force him into co-operation. All the accusations against him were related to the name of his secretary Ivan Šalić, and were exploited in such extent that the Communist regime promoted them into Crusader leaders.

The accusations related to the Crusaders were reduced to the following: the hosting of the Ustasha colonel Erich Lisak at the Archbishop's home, receiving letters from the Ustasha Colonel Anto Moškov, gathering of medicines for the Crusaders, and finally, consecration of the Crusaders' flag. The consecration of the flag at the Archbishop's chapel was the crucial evidence of the conspiracy of the Archbishop of Zagreb and the Crusaders.¹⁹ The Crusaders' flag was consecrated on 21 October 1945, and was, allegedly, intended for the Crusader group of Martin Mesarov, a former HSS representative, which in fact did not exist. The whole case was staged by UDBA,

¹⁹ For more see in Zdenko Radelić, "Komunisti, križari i Katolička crkva u Hrvatskoj 1945.-1946. godine" ("Communists, Crusaders and the Catholic Church in Croatia, 1945-1946"), in: Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac, ed., *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, 2, Pecs, 19-21 November 1999 (Zagreb: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 2000), pp. 583-600.

at that time still OZNA. The operation lasted from mid 1945 until December 1945, when OZNA killed Mesarov and planted the body to the police as if he was killed in combat.

When the judicial proceedings were launched against Lisak, Šalić and others, who had been arrested in November 1945, Stepinac was arrested as well, on 23 September 1946, and the indictment against Stepinac was extended and the proceedings were merged. The Public Prosecutor of NRH, Jakov Blažević, claimed that during the Bishops' Conference and the Shepherd's Letter, around 20 September 1945, Šalić's "central group" was established, which was related to the Crusaders. In less than twenty days, on 11 October 1946, the sentence was pronounced to Stepinac and others, and the accusation on the conspiracy between Stepinac and the Crusaders was one of the most absurd accusations in the indictment.

The actual reason for Stepinac's persecution was the *Shepherd's Letter* issued by the Bishop's Conference, on 20 September 1945, prior to the elections for the Constituent Assembly. In the Communists' view, the letter falsely presented the situation and encouraged Ustashas and the rest of the opposition to continue more actively with their terrorist activities. The Communist authorities sought to compromise the Catholic Church by associating the *Shepherd's Letter* with the Crusaders' guerrilla activities. The letter contained a number of serious accusations against the authorities, and the gravest of them was that the new government had killed or imprisoned 501 priests during and after the war.

The basic intention of the judicial proceedings was to portray the Crusaders in the most negative light and to associate such picture of them with the Catholic Church, and thus provoke public fury against its hierarchy. The political motivation of the Crusader's activities was not mentioned, not only to demotivate possible new sympathisers, but also to use the Crusaders in vilifying the Catholic Church, and thus limit its independence. But the Catholic Church, except for few individuals, was not engaged on the Crusaders' side. On the other hand, due to the KPJ's intention to subject the Church to its total control, many priests saw the restoration of Yugoslavia and the KPJ in power as a threat to the religious interests of the Croatian nation, and thus to the nation itself, which was the likely reason why some of them sympathised with the Crusaders' endeavours.

Orthodox Church and Communists

The KPJ's persecution was directed against all religious congregations in Croatia, but there were no serious conflicts with the Serb Orthodox Church (Srpska pravoslavna crkva - SPC). In those days Tito himself confirmed "Loyalty" and "patriotism" of the Orthodox clergy, as opposed to the "unseemliness" of the Catholic prelates.²⁰ One can presume that there was no conflict because the SPC was supporting the new authorities in relation

²⁰ Josip Broz Tito, *Govori i članci (Speeches and Articles)* (Zagreb), pp. 281-283.

to the NDH and the restoration of Yugoslavia, and the reuniting of Serbs in a single state, the main motivation of the political engagement of that Church, weakening its political commitment. Besides, there are many indications of the popularisation of the KPJ among the Serbs in Croatia, who had been participating in the partisan movement in a percentage much larger than their share in the population. That probably resulted in their ateiisation and weakened influence of the SPC. Thus, the different attitude of the KPJ towards the KC and the SPC was in fact the consequence of the different attitudes of the two Churches towards the Communist authorities and Yugoslavia. For example, according to UDBA's data, two thirds of Orthodox priests joined the priest association founded by the regime, whose task was to co-operate with the authorities through the NF. In contrast, a "large majority" of the Catholic Church clergy was "reactionary and imbued with hatred for the people's government".²¹ That is why the authorities' perceptions of the two Churches were different, and thus the accusations as well.

Anti-Communist Guerrillas

Apart from the political activities, the Communist regime was troubled by the armed resistance as well, especially the one of the Crusaders.²² They were formed mostly as a result of the spontaneous gathering of soldiers of the armed forces of the NDH after their rout in 1945. Having abandoned the compromised Ustasha titles and symbols, the Crusaders fought against the Communist government and Yugoslavia, and for the restoration of the NDH. Anti-Communism, anti-Yugoslavism and the independent state of Croatia were their motivation to continue with the struggle. Many Crusaders counted on Ante Pavelić's return, and many hoped that Maček might become the leader of the Croatian nation. Upon the disintegration of the NDH and the defeat of the Ustasha's ally, the Third Reich, the political orientation of the emigrated NDH leaders and Crusaders became pro-Western. They were counting on the alliance with the USA and Great Britain, which broke the war alliance with the USSR. The leadership of the NDH emphasised that the priority of its fight had been and remained the Croatian state. They denied any association to fascism or a Nazi-type system.

The Crusaders were not a compact military force. They were active in more than 200 unrelated groups, without real commanders or political leadership. The NDH leadership abroad intended to unite them into one movement, the Croatian National Resistance, by organising an operation under a symbolic name *Akcija 10. travnja* (*Operation April 10th*). They believed the Crusaders would be the striking force, which would restore the state, but

²¹ HDA, not organised, UDB reports and enemy activities, 1945, 1946, 1947 and 1948 (Hostile activities of priests. Activities of religious organisations in 1947).

²² For more see in: Zdenko Radelić, *Križari – gerila u Hrvatskoj* (*Crusaders – Guerrilla in Croatia*) (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, Dom i svijet, 2002).

the attempt was prevented by UDBA's operation *Gvardijan* in the summer of 1948.

The most intensive Crusaders' activities were recorded after the military defeat in 1945 and 1946. As early as winter 1946/1947, most of the Crusader groups dissembled or were destroyed. In 1947, most of them disappeared and the remaining groups were struggling for mere survival. The last Crusader actions were recorded in 1952, when the last group was formed. One can say that, as the war between the democratic West and the Communist East did not occur, the guerrilla movement did not get the assistance they expected, and was destroyed by the decisive strikes of the Communist government.

The Crusader groups normally had five to ten members. Larger groups were rare. In fact, there were few groups organised in a military manner with a command hierarchy and strict rules of conduct. They mainly attacked collective farms, as a symbol of Communism, but also because they were one of the main supply sources. They often attacked Communist activists, and more rarely police patrols. By intercepting individuals, occasionally blocking roads and attacking collective farms and private houses, the Crusaders were creating the conditions for a state of emergency for a number of years after the war. Although they were using the absence of the regime's units to move freely in some villages, the Crusaders did not have territories under their control. The Crusader groups were active in villages only, which they used for supplies and as shelters. Armed operations in cities were rare. Based on the place of their origin and activities, as well as the origin of the movement members, the Crusaders were a rural guerrilla force. In the cities, there illegal organizations were recorded, which wrote slogans, tore down posters and other propaganda material, and some of them even armed themselves. The urban members were mainly high-school and university students.

According to UDBA's calculations, by 1 July 1948 in Croatia, there were 3,688 guerrilla fighters. That figure included active and passive guerrilla fighters, the so-called "bunkers" and accomplices, but also a small number of Chetniks. An approximate number of participants in the armed struggle in Croatia, in the period 1945-1950, was between 3,500 and 4,000. As time went on, their numbers went going down, from 2,500 guerrilla fighters in 1945, to 540 in 1946, 510 in 1947, 243 in 1948, and ten in 1949. After 1950, there were less than ten of them, and they completely disappeared in 1952.

Unlike the Crusaders, who were active on the whole territory of Croatia, except for Istria and Dalmatian coast, (but including the area at the foot of the Velebit mountain range), Chetnik activities were recorded in areas with a larger portion of Serb population. Groups with a monarchist orientation were also mostly active in Medimurje, along the Slovenian border. There is no precise data on the total number of Chetniks in Croatia after the war. Immediately after the war, there were several hundred of them, but as early as autumn 1945, there were no more than seventy of them. To illustrate their force we can use the data pertaining to Lika. The earliest estimates in 1945

spoke of 350 Chetniks, and by autumn that year, there were only sixty-three remaining.

In Croatia, Chetnik guerrillas were much weaker than Ustasha guerrillas, and in fact they were not a real threat to the Communist government. The situation slightly changed in the late 1940s due to resistance to the Communist measures in rural areas. Nevertheless, those social movements or peasant rebellions in Kordun and Banovina, with the recorded traces of Serb nationalism, were only short-lived. They were suppressed in their early beginnings by the government's efficient measures, and the dissatisfaction was also tempered by the abandonment of the most radical measures in villages.

The Communist government dealt drastically with the Crusaders and Chetniks. It organised search parties, traps and raids in villages. Apart from threatening and physically mistreating Crusaders' families, the government took drastic measures of relocating them to two camps created specifically for that purpose. The proclamation of amnesty in the summer of 1945 also influenced the decision to surrender by many guerrilla fighters and those who were in hiding out of fear of retribution by the Communist victors.

It is important to emphasise that in the fight against all their political opponents, the Communists were eagerly accusing them of being Crusaders and Chetniks. It is undisputable that many accusations against HSS members and the Catholic clergy, as well as the Archbishop of Zagreb Stepinac, of being linked with the Crusaders, were designed by the Communist leaders and carried out under UDBA's directions. In that way, they could get even with their opponents very efficiently and create an area wide enough to restructure the society without fear of any opposition party or movement.

Conclusion

The process of stratification of the HSS, which had many characteristics of a national movement, was sped up by the establishment of the NDH, but also of the partisan movement under the Communist Party leadership, as well as the rising against the Ustasha regime and the resistance to the Axis. The HSS was totally disoriented in the period following the war. Vladko Maček, with some other party leaders, emigrated to France, and then to the USA, having estimated that that was the best solution in his attempts to influence the political developments in the country. The group influenced by Košutić followed Maček's attitude. As they had earlier renounced the Ustasha regime, they also renounced all the requirements of the Communist regime. They demanded the full introduction of political and civil liberties, as well as the realisation of the Croatian people's right to elect, in free elections, the representatives and government system of its choice.

The aim of the fierce KPJ campaign was to disable the most dangerous opponent among Croats by equating Maček's views with the Ustasha's, and to replace the HSS with the newly formed HRSS. The HRSS was a party lacking organisation and membership, and its Executive Committee, under

the old party name, was implementing the KPJ political programme among the Croatian peasantry. As a kind of Communist section for peasants, whose activities depended on the work of its immediate leadership and local Communist organisations, it was to serve the KPJ in reaching the peasants and dispersing their fears of Communism. The HRSS was mostly used in the NF pre-election campaigns. When the KPJ established itself in power, the HRSS started to die out quickly and disappeared from the political scene.

Having totally taken over the government system, the KPJ achieved full NF precedence for the elections for the Constituent Assembly of FNRJ and the Constituent Assembly of the NRH, and thus confirmed its absolute predominance. The initiatives that were persistently being taken by some HSS leadership members were cut through by the KPJ's radicalised repressive policy in 1947, consisting of staged political processes. Most of the tried HSS leaders were being convicted for their make-believe treason, co-operation with the enemy, associating with the imperialist forces, spying and terrorism.

Maček's ideas and followers became synonyms for treason and alliance with the Ustasha movement, which was the government's instrument for preventing any HSS activities. When certain opposition activities could not be labelled as being Ustasha, they were just incriminated as Maček's. Unlike the HSS, the Ustasha movement, which was active through Crusader groups, after its national, religious and racial bigotry, and the defeat in the war, adjusted its crucial political starting points to the new circumstances, and sought its new allies in the West. But the advantage the Communists had obtained was irretrievable.

The revengeful conduct was the winner's right and the big powers failed to react. The Communists found justification for their radicalism, which was sometimes at lower levels accompanied by Serb retribution, as revenge for the Ustasha radicalism. In the world divided by the cold war, Communist Yugoslavia, since 1948 disloyal to the world's Communist movement, found itself at its borders, and the world's major powers were trying to win or at least not to lose it. In such conditions, the opposition could not get real support, and the population, exhausted by the war and post-war violence and poverty, having lived to see the fall of the NDH and the end of the civil war, accepted the Communist government, which offered hope, especially to young people, of a better and more righteous life. Even the most dedicated followers of the HSS and the Crusader movement failed to offer a strong and long-lasting resistance. The Catholic Church, however, as a religious institution, which the KPJ could not subject to its direct control, was seen by many as a possible centre of resistance for all those who thought that Communist Yugoslavia did not and would not satisfy the social and national aspirations of the Croatian people.

Translated by Ida Jurković

Die Opposition in Kroatien 1945-1950

Zusammenfassung

Aufgrund von Archivquellen und Literatur stellt der vorliegende Beitrag die Lage in Kroatien nach Kriegsende und der Regierungsübernahme seitens der Kommunistischen Partei Jugoslawiens (KPJ) von 1945 bis 1950 knapp dar. Hervorgehoben wird die Tätigkeit der Opposition, deren legale und illegale Aktivitäten. Die Opposition wirkt nicht einheitlich. Einheit beweisen verschiedene Oppositionszweige nur im Widerstand gegen die kommunistische Diktatur, während die Vorgehensart und die endgültigen Ziele der verschiedenen Oppositionsbewegungen Unterschiede aufweisen. Sie befassten sich mit der Lage Kroatiens innerhalb Jugoslawiens, der politischen Ordnung, dem Stand der Bürgerrechte und politischer Freiheiten. Wegen der vehementen Repression der Kommunistischen Partei und der allgegenwärtigen Angst, neben gleichzeitiger Sieges euphorie und dem in einem Teil der Bevölkerung herrschenden Glauben, dass nach dem Krieg gerade die Kommunistische Partei im Stande sei, eine gerechtere Gesellschaft aufzubauen, vermochte keine andere Partei oder Bewegung sich erneut zu organisieren, ein ganzheitliches politisches Programm aufzubauen, geschweige denn systematisch und langfristig Einfluss auszuüben.

Den Zeitraum von 1945-1950 kennzeichnete die KPJ, die ihre grenzenlose und unangefochtene Herrschaft verwirklichte aufgrund der Wiedergründung Jugoslawiens, dem Anschluss an die antifaschistische Siegerkoalition und der Durchführung revolutionärer Maßnahmen, selbst wenn diese nur in formaler Hinsicht demokratisch waren.

