

The Croatian reality in 1991 is expressed by the replacement of the letter “H” in HRVATSKA (CROATIA) with “K”, resulting to the word KRV (BLOOD in Croatian); author Boris Ljubičić, Zagreb, 1991.



THE FALL OF COMMUNISM AND THE GREATER SERBIAN IDEOLOGY

Demolition of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolically marked the beginning of the new era in European history and the introduction of multi-party democracy in most of previously communist countries in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, it imposed the question of the reorganization of Yugoslavia. In the mid-1980s in Serbia the Greater Serbian Ideology was founded, according to which the western border of the Serbian state so-called *Greater Serbia* was planned deep in the Croatian territory. For the extremist of the Greater Serbian Ideology Yugoslavia was acceptable only as a strictly centralized state with the domination of Serbia and the most numerous (Serbian) people in it. Therefore, any reorganization that could lead to the democratization and decentralization of Yugoslavia was unacceptable. The Serbian aggression against Croatia and Vukovar was preceded by the long process of political and public preparations for the publication of the draft report *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986. The Serbs who officially opposed the conquering policy of Serbia, unfortunately, could not change the course of events. Their voice of reason was overridden by the war desire of supporters of the Greater Serbian Idea.



Map of the “Great Serbia” borders (includes huge part of the territory of the Republic of Croatia and territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and territory of Macedonia).

The first parliamentary elections in Croatia were held on the 22nd of April 1990 with a second round of voting on the 6th of May. The first free elections since multi-party politics were introduced; they resulted in a victory for the Croatian Democratic Union.

The party based its campaign on the anti-communist mood which represented huge part of Croats and on the awakened national enthusiasm as the result of strengthening of Serbian nationalism since the mid-1980s and the demand for the centralization of Yugoslavia.

After election results in Croatia, military authorities of Yugoslavia immediately reached an agreement with the Serbian leadership. They confiscated almost all the weapons of Croatian territorial defense and placed it in a warehouse under the control of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA). By disarming Croatia JNA secured complete superiority in the case of an armed conflict, the certainty which appeared to be growing.

The unconstitutional actions of the part of the Serbs started after the establishment of democratically elected government in August 1990. At the exact same time, the armed rebellion of the Serbian extremists in Croatia had started – the infamous “Log Revolution”. The ultimate purpose of this rebellion was to unify parts of Croatian territory to Serbian state, which would include most of the former Yugoslavia. After March 1991 the armed attacks of the Serbian terrorists on Croatian police increased. In early May 1991 in one day, 13 Croatian police officers were killed by the Serbian extremists: 12 in Borovo Selo near Vukovar and 1 in village Polača near Zadar. In the conflict in Borovo Selo, more than 20 Croatian police officers were wounded and 1 terrorist was killed. Such a number of casualties in a single day provoked the revolt of Croatian citizens and caused a war psychosis in Croatia as well as vengeful acts of individuals against citizens of Serbian nationality, which the Croatian authorities have nevertheless managed to calm down. Therefore, at that time there were no new victims.

Unfortunately, negotiations on a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Yugoslavia were not successful. The open aggression of Serbian forces on Croatia began in the summer 1991.



Vukovar 1991: Do you remember?

THE ATTACK OF THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL ARMY AND SERBIAN TROOPS ON VUKOVAR

The simultaneous murders of the 13 Croatian police officers on the 2nd of May 1991 additionally aggravated the security situation in parts of Croatia affected by the crisis, especially the municipality of Vukovar, where the state of war prevailed. In the battles with Serbian terrorists in early July 1991, Croatian forces were able to defend town Borovo Naselje and in early August they ensured control over village Lužac, which was important for the mobility of the so-called “corn” way, which was connecting Vukovar with Vinkovci during the siege over the villiages: Bogdanovci, Marinci and Nuštar. Armed attacks and shelling of the city in August 1991 became everyday reality for Vukovar.

After first failures, the Commander of the JNA so-called Generalštab OS SFRJ (General Staff of the SFRJ Armed Forces) established his forces into 2 operations groups: “North” and “South” with the boundar y line on the river Vuka and on the 30th of September 1991 JNA started the operation of V ukovar.

The siege around Vukovar was increasingly gripping and the help for Croatian defenders could only come from direction of town Vinkovci, because all the villages in direction to town Ilok from mid-October 1991 were occupied by the JNA. Because of the solid block, defenders of Vukovar were running low on ammunition. There were no major fresh forces to replace, and the number of dead and wounded were increasing every day. In contrast, the JNA was constantly bringing new forces and military equipment.

The JNA forces crushed the resistance of the besieged defenders of Vukovar and on monday the 18th of November 1991 they occupied the center of Vukovar. The next day, 19th of November the part of Vukovar Borovo Naselje was also occupied and the small part of Croatian defenders continued to resist until the early morning hours of the 20th of November. Occupation of the city was followed by mass executions of Croatian soldiers as well as lootings, persecutions and executions of civilians.

Intolerance of Serbian authorities in occupied Vukovar against the Croatians, Croatian identity, Croatian historical icons and Croatian poets was best reflected in the new decision for renaming of streets and cities which started on the 16th of July 1992. The street that was named after Croatian beloved politician and leader Stjepan Radić (who was killed as a Croatian representative in 1928 in the Yugoslav Parliament – “The National Assembly” in Belgrade) was renamed after his murderer Serbian representative Puniša Račić.

During the attack on Vukovar almost all economic and residential buildings in the city were destroyed, including: hospitals, religious, cultural and historical monuments. Vukovar was the first town in Europe to suffer such a devastation since the Second World War. Therefore, it became a symbol of Croatian resistance.

According to the 1991 census, the municipal-ity of Vukovar had 84,189 inhabitants: 36,910 Croats (43.8%), 31,445 Serbs (37.4%), 1375 Hungarians (1.6%), 6,124 (7.3%) those who declared themselves to be Yugoslavs and 8,335 (9.9%) other or undecided.

The town of Vukovar in 1991 had a total of 44,369 inhab-itants: 21,065 Croats (47.2%), 14,425 Serbs (32.3%), 919 Ruthenians (2.1%), 694 Hungarians (1.5%), 147 Slovaks (0.3%), 94 Germans (0.2%), 4355 who declared themselves to be Yugoslavs (9.8%) and 2940 (6.6%) others or unde-cided.




A STORY OF LOVE

The time we live in is so unpleasant that you wish you had not even been born, or rather that you had been born at some other time, on another occasion, simply because right now there is not enough love to go around. What is the use of big houses, expensive cars, winter holidays in Vysoké Tatry, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, expensive perfumes and briefings? These are just shadows of real life. We give ourselves up to the narcotics of delusion, the illusory, secret paths of life, and when it is already too late, with our eyes closed to our own failings, we reach maturity; we suddenly realize that it is too late to start again. The end is here, it is perhaps already peering around the next corner.

There is no way we can steal back the years, steal happiness – if there is no love. There may seem to be sun and joy, you may imagine that your success is complete as you earn a medal, in the shadow of great men, but I have seen many who, pockets empty walk with heads held high around this town. Their joy in having nothing is much greater. Because they have this town. They have friends. They have a soul. They didn't have money for Zagreb, Vienna or Prague. Their money was left in the glasses they emptied with friends with whom they later waited for the sunrise over the Croatian barricades. For some that waiting took too long and they were lost. But we know full well where they are. If life allows us to let our love control us, as their love carried them, at the end of the road, perhaps we can expect that we too will die happy.

Siniša Glavašević

*A story by the journalist from Croatian Radio Vukovar, Siniša Glavašević, who was captured and killed at Ovčara by Serb forces after the occupation of Vukovar, written during the siege and destruction of Vukovar.



The Vukovar Water Tower, the consequences after the attack of Yugoslav National Army and Serbian troops in autumn 1991 (photograph Marko Perić).



Vukovar's Croatian forces defenders, September, 1991 (photograph Mario Filipi).



Destroyed tank of Yugoslav National Army on the Trpinjska road ("The Tank Cemetery"), Vukovar, September 1991.



CROATIAN DEFENSE FORCES

Poorly equipped and not numerous Croatian defenders were organized through their local community offices and defense was founded on the resistance "points" set up along the bordering lines with the enemy territory. Most of the veterans and their commanders did not have the necessary military training or combat experience. Defending the city depended on their ingenuity and courage.

According to some figures, during the Serb siege of Vukovar (including the village of Bogdanovci), doctors and medical staff of Vukovar Hospital were defended by approximately 4000 Croatian veterans. The number of armed defenders in the town itself at some point exceeded 1800 to 2000 members of the police, the Croatian National Guard (ZNG), Croatian Defence Forces (HOS) and volunteers from various parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, despatched into the 204th CA Brigade, stretched over more than 10 km of frontlines. Alongside the Croats, the town was also defended by people of other nationalities in Croatia – Serbs, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Germans and others.

It is estimated that during the final battle for the city, Croatian troops in that area had available around 6800 souls, 15 tanks, 11 armored vehicles, 52 20-100 mm caliber guns, 32 guns of more than 100 mm caliber, 1 multiple rocket launcher and 68 mortars. It became clear that with this force it was impossible to defend the town from attack by the much more numerous and better armed aggressor.



Cold and dark shelters, part of children's everyday life in Vukovar, September, 1991 (photograph Mario Filipi).

THE FORCES OF THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL ARMY AND SERBIAN TROOPS

According to incomplete data, in the Battle of Vukovar the Serbian aggressor deployed more than 1000 armoured combat vehicles, aircrafts and naval vessels, and several hundred artillery pieces and rocket launchers which indiscriminately fired hundreds of thousands of shells and other projectiles on the town. The city was attacked by the tens of thousands of soldiers – members of the JNA and Serbian troops, mainly from the 1st Military District, based in Belgrade. The aggressor, in comparison to defenders, possessed the Air Force and more than ten times larger number of artillery weapons and more than a hundred times larger number of grenades and mines and other munitions.

According to the source from the Yugoslav National Army in mid-November 1991 the strength of the JNA in Eastern Slavonia was the following: 37,613 troops, 667 tanks, 505 armoured personnel carriers, 428 pieces of support artillery, 158 pieces of anti-armour artillery, 380 pieces of anti-aircraft artillery; the "military personnel" in the Serbian territorial defence units from Serbia numbered 9,582.



Vukovar hospital; the result of the Serbian aggression, autumn 1991 (photograph Damir Radnić).



Remains of the building "Borovo-Commerce" in Borovo Naselje destroyed in the last attacks by the JNA on the 18th and 19th of November in 1991; the photo was taken after Vukovar was occupied by Serbs (photograph Božo Biškupić).

When possible the lightly wounded patients were moved to the shelter in the "Borovo-Commerce" building, part of the "Borovo" complex, there was a reserve hospital with medical services. The Vukovar's best equipped shelter took care of approximately 250 wounded victims and 600 civilians.

VUKOVAR MEDICAL CENTRE

The first victims of the Serbian terrorists were taken to the Vukovar Medical Centre at the beginning of April 1991. Despite the clearly visible signs of the Red Cross on the roof and in the courtyard, an average of 70 to 80 shells fell on the Vukovar hospital every day during the siege. Due to the incessant artillery attacks of the JNA and Serbian units, the hospital departments could not be used for patients after the 25th of August 1991. Life and work at the hospital had to be transferred to the basement, the nuclear shelter was also used.

On the basis of available data, during the siege of Vukovar at the Vukovar Medical Centre around 2 500 wounded victims were admitted and treated. Over 1000 major operations were conducted. The youngest person treated was 6 months old and the oldest 88. Estimates show that 70% of the wounded were civilians. More than 80% of the wounds were caused by explosions, less than 10% were provoked by bullets, and roughly 5% were burns from napalm bombs.

During the most violent siege of the town, 16 children were born in the hospital. Five of them were born prematurely. Four of the children survived, among them a child whose dad was in the forces that were attacking the city. All victims were treated equally, irrespective of their faith or ethnicity. Furthermore, JNA soldiers were treated in the hospital and members of the infamous Serbian units.



Chetnik units in Vukovar singing they will “slaughter Croats”.



Yard of the Harbour Authority at the end of the siege of Vukovar (photograph Ante Arić).



The column of Croatian refugees, former Marshal Tito Street, Vukovar, November 1991.

Dead bodies of the Vukovar citizens killed in the Serbian shelling of the town; yard of the Vukovar Harbourmaster’s Office where bodies were brought towards the end of the Serbian siege in November 1991, because they could not be buried owing to fierce shelling. This photograph of the Serbian crime taken in November 1991, which toured the world, was first presented by Serbian propaganda as a crime committed by Croatian forces in the battle of Vukovar in 1991, and then as a crime committed by Croatian troops in the Operation Storm in 1995 (!): in the collected papers on “Serbian refugees and displaced persons in the late 20th century” (Belgrade, 2000), published by the Centre for Strategic Studies of the University of Belgrade, the photograph is presented with the caption “*After the Croatian Storm the Serbs were not even buried*”. The publication also contains other photographs showing the ruins of Vukovar and the people displaced from the town, also presented as examples of “Serbian suffering”.



A victim of an attack by the JNA and Serb forces Vukovar, November 1991 (photograph Christopher Morris).

HUMAN LOSSES

According to figures from the Office for Detained and Missing Persons of the *Ministry of the Family, Veterans Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity* of the Republic of Croatia, of November 2007, during the Serb aggression against Vukovar in 1991, at least 1 739 people were killed, among whom were numerous children and around 2 000 citizens were expelled, mainly those of non-Serb origins. According to some sources, 879 veterans were killed or missing and 777 were wounded.

In the Vukovar-Syrmia County 52 mass graves and several hundred individual graves were found. Until December 2009 the remains of 2036 victims were exhumed (from the biggest mass grave, on the New Vukovar Cemetery, 938 bodies were exhumed). Also, among the 1030 person which were registered as missing in the aggression on the Republic of Croatia 1991/1992, 525 person were missing in the Vukovar-Syrmia County, from which 427 people were missing and were violently taken in the municipality Vukovar (including Sotin, Grabovo and Lipovača).

In Serbian prison camps in Croatia, Serbia and Yugoslavia at least 2 796 people were imprisoned, abused and subjected to horrifying torture, having been captured in Vukovar area in 1991. The youngest prisoner was not yet 15 years old and the oldest was 81.

At least about 19 500 Croatian citizens were killed or went missing in the Homeland War (estimates). According to the data from the war minister of health of the Republic of Croatia, Professor Andrija Hebrang (2013) on the Croatian side in the Homeland War, i. e. from 1991 to 1998, a total of 14 154 Croatian veterans and civilians (6891 soldier and 7263 civilians) were killed and disappeared. The number of killed civilians includes 345 children. Altogether, 30 578 people were wounded (the figure does not include the area occupied during the war). The number of wounded civilians includes 1 044 of children.

In the same period about 5 300 persons, mostly of Serb nationality, were killed in the occupied parts of the Republic of Croatia (about 60-70% were “soldiers”).



Nikola Tesla Street, the centre of Vukovar, the 18th of November 1991.

STORY OF A TOWN

I abandon all search for justice and truth. I give up all attempts at submitting ideals to my life. I give up everything that I considered until yesterday essential to a good beginning or a good ending. I would probably abandon myself, but I can't. Because, who would be left if we all abandoned ourselves and fled in fear? Who would the town be left with? Who will take care of the town while I'm not there, while I try to find myself in the rubbish-heaps of human souls, while I am alone and stagger, wounded and tired, in the heat, while my eyes begin to face my personal defeat?

Who will guard my town? My friends? Who will extract Vukovar from darkness? There are shoulders broader than mine and yours. So, if it's not too difficult for you, if there's still a zest of youthfulness in you, join in. Someone messed with my parks, the benches on which your names are still carved and the shade where you both gave and received your first kiss. Someone simply stole everything, how else could I explain that there is not even shade anymore. There are no shop windows that filled you with joy, no cinema where you watched the saddest film. You must build from scratch, first your past, looking for your roots, and then your present. And if there is still strength left in you, invest it in the future. And don't be alone in the future. As for the town, don't worry. All that time it was in you, hidden so that the oppressor wouldn't find it. The town – that's you!

Siniša Glavašević

*Story of the Journalist of Croatian radio Vukovar, Siniša Glavašević who after the occupation of Vukovar, was abducted in the hospital and killed by Serb forces at Ovčara; written during the siege and the destruction of Vukovar.



Building of the railway station, destroyed in the attacks of JNA and Serbian forces 1991 (photograph Dionizije Šebetovsky).



Vukovar, the 8th of June 1997: the “Freedom and Return Train” symbolically brought Croatia back to Vukovar (photograph Božo Biškupić).

The victor who doesn't know how to forgive, plants the seed of discord and future ills. And the Croatian people don't want this. They didn't chose to suffer here in Vukovar and throughout Croatia. Everything we are doing now is not focused on parochial local interests but on the overall interests of Croatia and Europe, in the interest of peace, of the future of this region and of Europe. Long live the coexistence between the Croatian and Serbian people and other ethnic communities in this region! Long live our only and eternal Croatia! (From the address of the President of the Republic of Croatia dr. Franjo Tuđman in Vukovar, the 8th of June 1997).



Borovo naselje, 15th of January 1998 (photograph Marko Perić).



The support for peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region: Senior Officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Croatia together in Vukovar (photograph Marko Perić).

THE PEACEFUL REINTEGRATION OF THE CROATIAN DANUBE RIVER REGION

The “*Basic Agreement on Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem*” was signed in Erdut and Zagreb on the 12th of October 1995. The agreement was a precondition for the establishment of permanent peace in this area that was destroyed by the war, human suffering, forced migration and the general social and economic impact.

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1037 on the 15th of January 1996 which established the United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES), led by U.S. Gen. JP Klein. The objectives of the mission UNTAES were: to disarm the area and return it to the sovereign control of the Croatian government, to keep the multiethnic and multicultural character of the area, to promote an atmosphere of trust; allow refugees and displaced persons freely to return to their homes, to promote adherence to the highest standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to promote redevelopment and rehabilitation of areas, to organize free and fair local elections.

The local elections which where held on the 13th of April 1997, were particularly important for the success of the mission and for providing conditions for the return of Croatian refugees. The conducted elections established the political system equivalent to the one in other parts of Croatia. By participating in the elections, members of the Serbian minority from Vukovar and the Croatian Danube Region were given the opportunity to choose their legitimate representatives in local government bodies and government.

With the attention to accelerate the process of peaceful reintegration Croatian President dr. Franjo Tuđman established in October 1997, *The National Committee for the Implementation of Programs to Establish Trust and to Accelerate the Return of the Normalization of Life in the War-affected Areas of the Republic of Croatia*.

The President of the Committee was Mrs Vesna Škare Ožbolt from the Office of the Croatian President while the Vice President was Mr Ivica Vrkić from Osijek (Eastern Slavonia) and Vojislav Stanimirović as Serbian representative from then occupied Croatian Danube Region. Board of Vukovar was established on the 3rd of November 1997.

The Resolution of the UN Security Council in 1045, from 19th of December 1997, gave full support to the completion of the mandate of the peacekeeping mission UNTAES, which formally ended the process of peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region and Vukovar, and the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia. The closing ceremony was held on the 15th of January 1998, in Borovo (neighbourhood of Vukovar). Based on the different experiences for the process of reintegration, UNTAES mission was considered one of the most successful UN peacekeeping missions in the world.



An aggression on Vukovar's European identity. The Eltz Manor, a 18th century baroque castle own by the Prince-Archbishop of Mainz and the House of Eltz. The communist regime expelled the Eltz family from Vukovar in 1945 and the Yugoslav People's Army bombed their castle in 1991.



A European renaissance at the Croatian Danube. A restored Eltz Manor was reopened in 2011. The project was financed by the Croatian Government and the Council of Europe Development Bank.



A city of culture. The cultural centre "Hrvatski dom", founded in 1922, was a pivotal institution for Vukovar's society and cultural life. The cultural centre "Hrvatski dom" in ruins after the aggression on Vukovar.



A new culture of hope. The new "Hrvatski dom", restored and reopened in 2007, as a symbol of a new culture of hope.



The church and Franciscan monastery of Saints Philip and Jacob was a frequent target of the Yugoslav People's Army artillery. Since the church was still standing, Serbian paramilitary forces intended to bomb it again in 1996, but were stopped by the Alsace native and US General Jacques Paul Klein, Head of the UN Transitional Authority.



Renewed faith. The church of Saints Philip and Jacob stands today as a living testimony of the solidarity and generosity of people all around Croatia and Europe who contributed to its restoration.



Upon a decision of the Croatian Parliament, the Royal Gymnasium of Vukovar was founded in 1891. Latin and French were taught since 1895. The Royal Gymnasium was a centre of excellence for the entire Sirmium County. The Gymnasium, Vukovar's High School, completely destroyed by the Yugoslav People's Army in 1991.



A new and bright look to the future. The restored Gymnasium is now educating new generations of Vukovar students in a modern Croatia, reintegrated into Europe. It stands also as a reminder of the importance of education in overcoming the challenges of today, honouring the city's heroic history and building a future of peace and prosperity for all the citizens of Vukovar.



Bogdanovci, destroyed village during the attacks of the JNA on Vukovar, September 1991 (photograph Marko Perić).



Almost the entire non-Serbian population was killed or banished from areas under the control of Serbian forces. Serbian extremists torched and demolished many homes owned by Croats and almost all Catholic churches and religious buildings; the Croatian national heritage was also plundered and destroyed. During the war in the Republic of Croatia the following property was destroyed or damaged: 195 000 to 217 009 housing units (depending on the census; mainly during the attacks of Serbian forces in 1991), about 120 industrial buildings and 2 423 cultural monuments (out of which 495 were religious, mainly Catholic, buildings, in areas occupied by the Serbs).

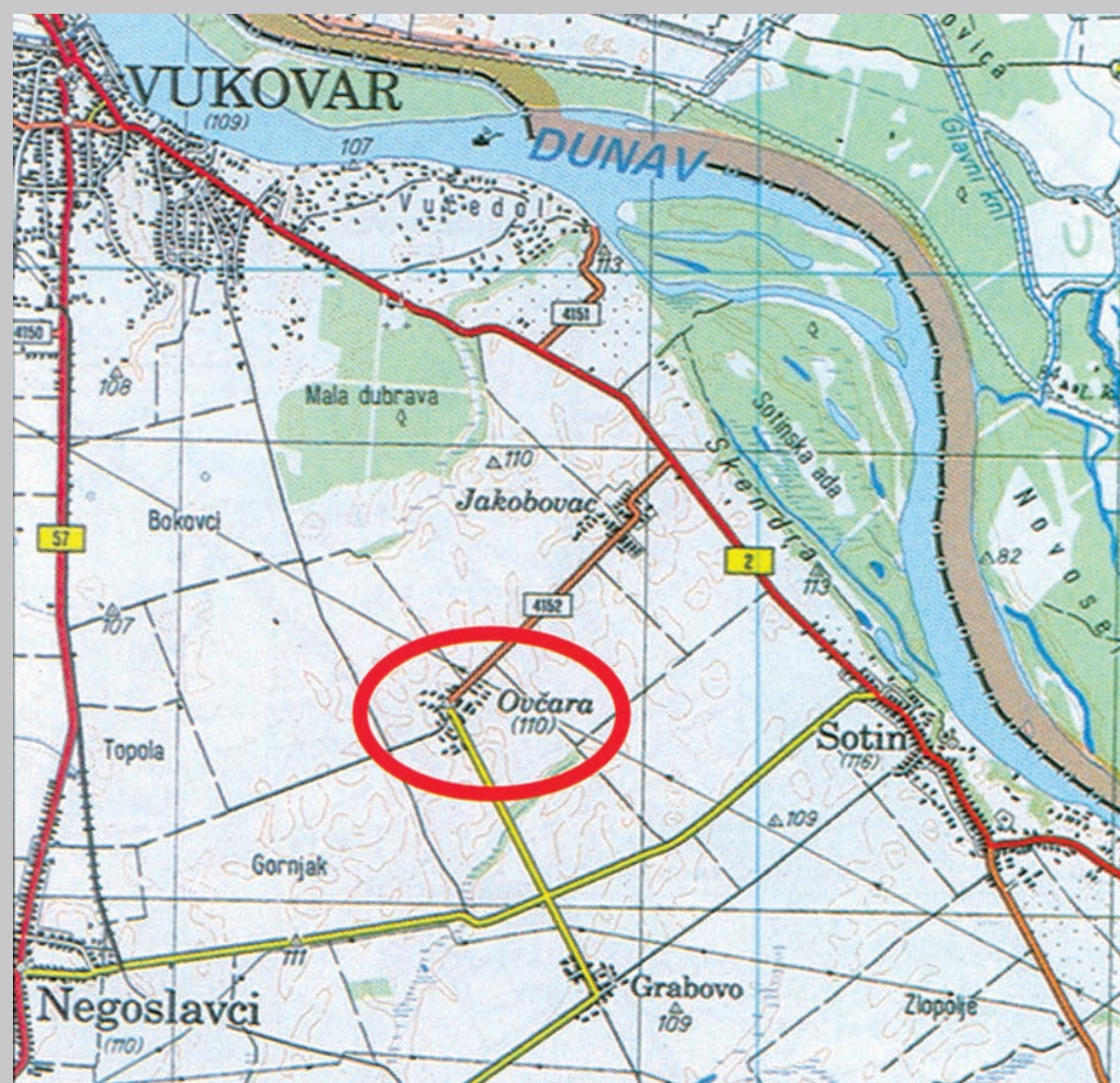
In the first year of the war 590 settlements in 58 Croatian municipalities were affected by the war – 35 were totally destroyed, and 34 sustained major damage (including larger towns: Vukovar, Vinkovci, Osijek, Pakrac, Gospić, Otočac, Dubrovnik, Karlovac, Sisak, Petrinja...).

In order to avoid generalization, it should be noted that many Serbs in Serbia refused mobilization because they did not want to participate in a war of conquest, and that many found themselves in the JNA and Serbian-Montenegrin units that attacked Croatia owing to a variety of circumstances, i.e., inertia of service or mobilization, or absence of information due to strong anti-Croatian propaganda in the media. Many of them behaved like soldiers and not like criminals. Some even succeeded in saving the lives of Croats mortally threatened by extremist members of Serbian units; some Serbs were even killed while trying to prevent their fellow countrymen from committing crimes against Croats. Unfortunately, there were also many who went on the rampage against Croatia driven by Greater Serbian ideas and hate, and they were largely those who committed crimes in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The cruel and bloody Serbian aggression against Croatia and the crimes committed by Serbian forces facilitated inappropriate and unacceptable reactions of individuals on the Croatian side, with an adverse effect on the condition of public security and the growth of crime and violence even in areas under the control of Croatian authorities – such as, among other things, murders of Serbian civilians and the destruction of the property of ethnic Serbs, Croatian citizens. The Croatian judiciary has largely instituted criminal proceedings against perpetrators of crimes in the Homeland War. However, just as in any war, the perpetrators of all the murder cases were not prosecuted.



Monument to the victims killed on Ovčara (author: Slavomir Drinković).



The excavation of mass graves at Ovčara (Vukovar) was performed during the process of peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region (September and October 1996), from which were exhumed 200 bodies of the wounded victims and medical staff from the Vukovar Hospital. They were executed by the members of the JNA, on the contrary of the “Protocol of the Agreement on the Neutralization and Free Evacuation of the Vukovar Hospital”, which was signed by the representatives of the JNA, Croatian authorities and the international community, and on the contrary to all international conventions, norms and rules of war. The youngest victim was 16 years-old and the oldest 72 years. Among those killed were two women who were in the advanced stage of pregnancy.

The crime at Ovčara is one in series of mass crimes committed by Serb aggressors in the attack on Vukovar. Over time, Ovčara has become a symbol of memory for all the execution sites and graves left behind by the JNA in the broader Vukovar area: Antin, Berak, Bogdanovci, Borovo Selo, Bršadin, Celije, Čakovci, Dalj, Daljski Atar – Globovac, Ilok, Lovas, Marinci, Mikluševci, Mohovo, Negoslavci, Novi Jankovci, Petrovci, Slakovci, Stari Jankovci, Svinjarevci, Sotin, Tordinci, Tovarnik, Vukovar – Novo Groblje, Nova Ulica, the Velepromet warehouse and many other places of mass or individual Serb crimes.

At least 150 of mass graves and more than 1 400 individual graves of victims of Serbian crimes, mostly Croats, but also members of other nationalities who didn't support the Greater Serbian ideology and aggression against Croatia, suggest that the killings were planned. By the 2011, the remains of 3 782 victims were exhumed from the graves, some of which were positively identified as the remains of 3 217 Croatian soldiers and civilians.



Names of victims whose bodies were exhumed from mass graves and identified, Memorial Cemetery, Vukovar, May 1998 (photograph Marko Perić).

THEY ARE OUR TRUTH

Karlo had only just graduated from high school in his Borovo. That autumn he sent his mother to join his sister in Zagreb. She was completing her education in a desire to help the town she came from. Karlo became a man overnight. With his peers and his father Josip, he remained behind to guard their family home. It was all they had, built by their own hard work. He was killed about a hundred meters from his home by enemy fire on Trpinjska Street – the road of heroes. The little hero Karlo, or what was left of him, was wrapped in a checkered blanket and buried in the sports stadium.

Who heard his father’s cry over the unending thundering of mortar fire?

Who saw his tears through the smoke in the burned out ruins?

The father’s body broke down as he was on guard on the doorstep of his family home. He was buried in a nearby garden. Father and son were exhumed from the New Graveyard in Vukovar in June 1998 The checkered blanket was the only recognizable sign of young Karlo. His father Josip’s watch is still keeping time today.

On the 13th of June 1998, Marica stood over the remains of her son Karlo and husband Josip at their funeral. She was burying her past and her future.

That day there was a wedding procession through Vukovar. Karlo’s peers honked their horns with one hand, and with the other, having just laid down their guns, they made the three-finger salute. There was a Serbian flag at the head of the parade.

Marica came face to face with the present, on the 13th of June 1998, in Croatian Vukovar.

Vukovar does not hurt us all the same, it cannot and must not! But who can silence the truth?

Ljerka Ivušić

Memorial cemetery for the victims of the Homeland War, Vukovar; 938 white crosses, one cross for each victim exhumed from the massive grave in that area.

