

Tomislav Jonjić

**ORGANISED RESISTANCE TO THE
YUGOSLAV COMMUNIST REGIME
IN CROATIA IN 1945-1953**

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Introduction

After the Second World War, Croatia again found itself in a Yugoslav state. After the difficult experience of the monarchic Yugoslavia (1918-1941) and the bloody conflicts during the war, the restoration of a Yugoslav state had many opponents among Croats.¹ The fact that in the new state Communists overwhelmed other political groups and took over all power and introduced a totalitarian system intensified that resistance and added a new ideological dimension to it. Apart from making use of the favourable foreign political environment, the totalitarian Communist regime retained power by using organised violence; specifically the physical liquidation of many people at the time it assumed power and immediately after it had consolidated its hold on the state, and strong repression throughout the regime's existence.² Consequently, the history of Communist Yugoslavia is at the same time the history of political persecution and political imprisonment. Among the thousands of judgements handed down in political trials, many were capital punishments and an even larger number of political sentences, which totalled thousands of years. The sentence was regularly accompanied by

* Tomislav JONJIĆ, Zagreb

¹ Regarding the position of Croats in monarchic Yugoslavia, see Rudolf Horvat, *Hrvatska na mučilištu* (Z (Zagreb, 1944); Rudolf Bičanić, *Ekonomska podloga hrvatskog pitanja*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb, 1938); Bosiljka Janjatović, *Politički teror u Hrvatskoj 1918.-1935.* (Zagreb, 2002); Jure Krišto and Ivica Miškulin, *Špijuni na hodočašću. Euharistijski kongres u Zagrebu 1930. godine u sustavu represije nad Hrvatima, Tkalčić. Godišnjak Društva za povjesnicu Zagrebačke nadbiskupije*, no. 9 (2005), pp. 273-326..

² Yugoslav communists had started building their repressive system as early as 1941, and after the war it became the key lever of the new regime's power. The Communist secret service OZN (Department for People's Protection) was established on 13 May 1944. In March 1946, the service was reorganised and divided into a Directorate for Research and Documentation (UID), a Directorate of State Security (UDB), a Military Intelligence Service (VOS) and a Counterintelligence Service (KOS). Later on, there were additional organisational changes. (See Croatian Parliament – Commission for Establishing Wartime and Post-war Victims (hereafter, HDS, Commission), *Izvešće o radu od osnutka (11. veljače 1992.) do rujna 1999.* (Zagreb, 8 October 1999), pp. 22-25. Also see Josip Jurčević, *Bleiburg – Jugoslavenski poratni zločini nad Hrvatima* (Zagreb, 2005), pp. 239-364.

additional protective measures, such as deprivation of a person's civil rights and confiscation of his property.

The real nature of the Yugoslav communist regime is reflected in the fact that the political prisoners of the Yugoslav regime remained in prisons even after the breakdown of the regime and the state it was protecting.³ As any other totalitarian regime, the Yugoslav communist system did not stop at the persecution of its opponents; it often imagined and created enemies in order to justify the introduction of new repressive measures. However, regardless of its use of repression, it persistently and constantly faced the hostility of a majority of citizens in Croatian areas. That hostility often took the form of organised resistance. However, the problem has not received much attention by serious scholars yet, although the Croatian political emigration has written on this question. Since 1990, a significant number of articles and books have been published in Croatia on this subject, but they are usually memoirs and focus on the tragic stories of individual people. Most of them deal with the tragic events at the end of the war.⁴ Many books are also dedicated to individual destinies in the post-war Communist dungeons.⁵ The prison system in Croatia and BiH has been explored in part, but there is still a great deal to be done.⁶ There has been a bit more systematic analysis of the per-

³ Even at the time of the first democratic elections in Croatia, in spring 1990, after the fall of the Berlin wall and the Ceaucescu's regime, numerous political prisoners who had been convicted in the communist Yugoslavia were still confined in Croatian prisons, among them Filip Bačić, Stjepan Deglin, Ivo Tubanović, Juraj Pilko, and Ludvig Pavlović, a member of the "Bugojno group." Political prisoners of other nationalities, especially Albanians, were also serving their time in Communist prisons in Croatia.

⁴ A lot of memoirs on that subject were published in *Politički zatvorenik*, a monthly magazine of the Croatian Association of political prisoners, as well as in other magazines and newspapers (*Narod, Glas Koncila* etc.). Books about the memories of Bleiburg and the Way of the Cross have been published by: Zvonimir Dusper, *U vrtlogu Bleiburga* (Zagreb, 1996); Tomislav Obrdalj, *Jedan život od Bleiburga do danas* (Sarajevo, 1998); Stipo Slipac, *Svjedok - Moj križni put* (Novi Travnik, 1996); Ivan Alilović, *Križni put i raspuća hrvatskih đaka, studenata i intelektualaca iz Hercegovine*, (Mostar - Zagreb, 1999); Nedžad Sulejmanpašić, *Od Sarajeva do Bleiburga u povratak. Ratni dnevnik 18. 12. 1944. - 11. 6. 1945.* (Zagreb, 2006), and others.

⁵ Branimir Petener, *Ustaše - spomen i baština* (Zagreb, 1992); Petar Peko Cota, *Svjedočenja* (Zagreb, 1994); Ivan J. PINTAR, *Četiri godine u Titovu paklu* (Zagreb, 1995); *Svjedočenje dvanaestorice: 20189 dana robije* (Rijeka, 1995); Mara Čović, *Sjećanje - svjedočenje: Zvuči kao priča a bila je istina!* (Rijeka, 1996); Ante Prpić, *Iza lepoglavskih rešetaka* (Rijeka, 1996); Slavko Radičević, *Robijaševi zapisi* (Rijeka, 1999); Blaž Bordić, *Moja sjećanja. Hrvati u okovima velikosrpskog i jugokomunističkog režima* (Donji Andrijevci, 2000); Ivo Grgurev, *Svjedočanstvo (jednog i mnogih stradanja)* (Split, no year [1999]); Julijan Ramljak, *Nečastiva urota* (Visovac, 2000); same author, *Nečastiva urota II*. (Visovac, 2000); Josip BEJUK, *Sjećanja logoraša br. 2544* (Sinj, 2000); Marica Stanković, *Godine teške i bolne* (Zagreb, 2000); Ivo Bjelokosić, *Svećenik matični broj St. Grad. 2019* (Dubrovnik, 2002); Baldo Mladošević, *Gospodin je bio moja snaga* (Dubrovnik, 2004), etc.

⁶ Augustin Franić has dealt in detail with the Penitentiary and Correctional Home in Lepoglava, *KPD Lepoglava - mučilište i gubilište hrvatskih političkih osuđenika* (Zagreb, 2000). Kaja Pereković has published a collection of memoirs and documents about the women's penitentiary in Požega: *Naše robijanje. Hrvatske žene u komunističkim zatvorima - okovane golubice* (Rijeka - Zagreb, 2004).

secution of the Catholic Church in the Croatian territories.⁷ There have also been many articles and one monograph on the Crusader Movement, which was active during the first post-war years in Croatia and BiH.⁸

This article aims to show that as early as since 1945 the Yugoslav regime in Croatia and BiH was facing not only the active and passive resistance of individuals, but also an organised resistance of illegal groups of Croatian peasants, workers, high-school students and university students. As a rule, those groups were created spontaneously and always in response to foreign-policy events and the internal political turmoil in Yugoslavia. In the first post-war years, the basic note in their political activities was the hope that the armed Crusader Movement would result in overthrowing the communist regime and establishing an independent Croatian state. When that hope came to nothing, the centre of illegal groups' activities focused on political action and propaganda whose aim was to strip bare the communist regime and discredit yugoslavism as an idea of statehood and nationality.

Attempts to organise armed resistance

Apart from mass executions of members of the armed forces of the former NDH and its supporters, during the spring and summer 1945 thousands of capital sentences were pronounced. In many cases, they were verbal, not written, and they were often formulated subsequently and in a form that was entirely different from the usual judgements in criminal proceedings.⁹ Those judgements covered the so-called old crimes, i.e. the conduct of the accused during the NDH period, with the mere affiliation to the Croatian armed forces or regular economic dealings were considered crimi-

⁷ I shall mention only some titles from an abundant bibliography on this problem: Stjepan Kožul, *Spomenica žrtvama ljubavi Zagrebačke nadbiskupije* (Zagreb, 1992); *Idem, Martirologij Crkve zagrebačke* (Zagreb, 1998); Andrija Nikić, *Hercegovački franjevci mučenici 1524.-1945.* (Mostar 1992); *Idem, Lučonoše naše vjere i uljudbe – mrtvoslovník hercegovačkih fratara*, (Mostar, 2004); Anto Baković, *Svećenici žrtve rata i poraća 1941.-1945.* (Zagreb, 1994); Petar Bezina *Franjevci provincije Presvetoga Otkupitelja – žrtve rata 1942.-1948.* (Split, 1995); *Idem, Šibenska biskupija kroz dva rata* (Šibenik, 1998); *Idem, Progoni biskupa, svećenika i redovnika Splitske metropolije i Zadarske nadbiskupije 1941.-1992.* (Split, 2000); A. Franić, *Svećenici mučenici – svjedoci komunističkog progona* (Dubrovnik, 1996); Žarko Ilić, "Hercegovački franjevci u komunističkim zatvorima" in: *Kršni zavičaj*, no. 31 (Humac, 1998), pp. 135-143; Marijan Karaula, *Žrtve i mučenici* (Sarajevo, 1999); Juraj Batelja [prepared], *Crna knjiga o grozovitostima komunističke vladavine u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, 1999); Jure Krišto, "Postupak komunista prema vjerskim službenicima, osobito pripadnicima Katoličke crkve nakon rata," 1945. – *razdjelnica hrvatske povijesti* (Collection of works from the scientific meeting at the at the Croatian Institute of History in Zagreb on 5-6 May 2006), (Zagreb, 2006), pp. 231-255, etc.

⁸ Zdenko Radelić, *Križari: gerila u Hrvatskoj 1945.-1950.* (Zagreb, 2002). Cf. Ante Vukić, *Velebitski vukovi. Zapisi iz hrvatske križarske borbe* (No place, 1984); Martin Grabarević, *Kalvarija hrvatskog vojnika*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb, 1993); Ivo Lučić-Paroković, *Uvijek uz Hrvatsku* (Drenovci, Hrašće, 1998), etc.

⁹ Cf. Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945.-1991.: od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb, 2006), pp. 63.

nal offences. Those “old offences” were often linked to “new” ones, that is, to the actual or alleged anti-Yugoslav activities after the war.

There followed a period of fear and general personal and legal insecurity. Living conditions and the general economic situation were very difficult. The war had exhausted Croatia, villages and towns had been destroyed and damaged, and its population had been decimated and was now faced with rationed supplies. Despite the regime’s promises to redistribute goods and establish a socially just order, nationalisation and agrarian reform only worsened Croatia’s war ravaged economy. At both actual and symbolic levels, a large majority of Croats felt vanquished as the glorification of Croatianness (Hrvatstvo) during NDH was replaced with brotherhood and unity,¹⁰ and streets and squares that had been named after Croatian national great men were renamed after the Red Army and the Soviet marshals. A collision of cultures was visible everywhere; instead of a European or its traditional Central European orientation, Croatia was exposed to the influence of the Communist East. Schools and universities were awash in Soviet books, and Soviet films were shown in cinemas. The new Yugoslav regime also directly persecuted key Croatian cultural institutions. Some of the leading persons of *Matica hrvatska* emigrated, while others were arrested or deposed, as the regime’s men took over the organization’s leadership. Another important Croatian cultural institution, Croatian Cultural Society *Napredak*, which was headquartered in Sarajevo, was banned after a staged trial in which its president, Ante Alaupović, and twenty-three of its members were found guilty and convicted.¹¹ Other important Croatian cultural societies were also disbanded, among them the St. Jerome Society and The Croatian Publishing and Bibliographic Institute. Croatian Encyclopaedia was no longer published, and its newly-printed fifth volume was destroyed. Many writers and culture professionals were prohibited from appearing and speaking in public. The Catholic press was banned or in other ways prevented from being published. Young people also suffered repression, for example, the frequent banning from school of politically unsuitable students whose diplomas were invalidated and who were unable to continue schooling—usually without any court proceedings or any formal attempt to establish individual guilt.¹²

¹⁰ Interestingly, the slogan “brotherhood and unity of all our nations and nationalities” was always limited to “brotherhood and unity” of Croats and Serbs, so “brotherhood and unity” never applied to, among others, Croats and Macedonians.

¹¹ The Archive of the Croatian Association of Political Prisoners (in further text: AHDPZ), Judgement of the Court of People’s Honour of Bosnia and Herzegovina, number 221/45 of 30 July 1945. Mladen Čaldarović, “‘Napredak’ 1945.-1949.,” *Radovi Hrvatskog društva za znanost i umjetnost* 3 (1995): 73-85.

¹² J. Juras alluded to the persecution of dissident students at the Classical High School in Zagreb 1945-46 in a polemic with Dražen Kalogjera (Jure JURAS, “Činjenice malo drugačije,” *Vjesnik*, 19 January 1996, pp. 34-35). A. Tomlinović has described discrimination and identification of enemies at Nova Gradiška High School in spring 1946 (Augustin Tomlinović-Samac, “Iz uspomena jednoga hrvatskog robijaša” (2), *PZ*, (8) 1998, no. 70: 41-42). Recollecting the activities of Branko Horvat, who later became a prominent economist, L. Buturac recalled that some thirty students who were considered unsuitable owing to their class or politics

As early as 1945, the Yugoslav intelligence service started to assassinate prominent Croatian political emigrants, killing at least sixty-eight; several dozen more were the victims of attempted kidnappings and assassinations.¹³

Determined to establish a totalitarian regime on the model of USSR, Yugoslav Communists undermined the restoration of even a pseudodemocratic regime and the resumption of political activity by pre-war political parties. However, for tactical reasons, they tolerated the existence of organisations that appeared to be non-communist during the process of acquiring diplomatic recognition, but these groups functioned under tight Communist control. These organizations were in fact instrumentalised marginal groups used by the regime to create an illusion of democracy. When such a false façade was no longer needed, these political groups were simply removed from the political scene.¹⁴ Whenever individuals or groups acted as if a multiparty system actually existed, the regime responded with repression. Because those leading people in the HSS (Croatian Peasant Party) who remained in Croatia sought to continue their political activities, a decision on the final political fight was made at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CK KPJ) in early 1947, and soon after many HSS leaders were arrested, as were large groups of students who supported the party.¹⁵

Such circumstances provoked resistance, and immediately after the collapse of the NDH an armed resistance emerged as groups that called themselves *križari* (Crusaders), *škripari*, *kamišari*, *šumnjaci*, etc. Their resistance to the new state and its regime lasted, with varying degrees of intensity, for ten years after the war.¹⁶ There were many such groups,¹⁷ and they existed in

were banned from the Požega High School in the academic year 1945-46. (Lojzo Buturac, "Jednom partizan, uvijek partizan", *Hrvatsko slovo*, (8) 2002, 27 December. Such measures were applied throughout Croatia in subsequent decades.

¹³ HDS, Commission, *Activity Report*, 21-38.

¹⁴ A classical example was the pro-Communist faction of the HSS, which was instrumentalised by the communist regime and used as the Executive Committee of the Croatian Republican Peasants' Party.

¹⁵ More in: Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1945.-1950.* (Zagreb, 1996). Among these trials were those against Tomo Jančiković and others and against Ivan Restek and others, in which ten persons were convicted because of their membership in an illegal organization of followers of Maček founded in 1945 (AHDPZ, Indictment of the Public Prosecutor's Office for the City of Zagreb no. K-48/1948 of 3 February 1948 against T. Jančikovića and others, and Judgement of the District Court for the City of Zagreb Kz-48/48 of 23 February 1948; Indictment of the Public Prosecutor's Office for the City of Zagreb – Security Department, no. B. 120/1948 of 22 March 1948 against I. Restak and others and Judgement of the District Court for the City of Zagreb no. K-139/48 of 2 April 1948.

¹⁶ For example, Crusader Antun Tuna Buturac was arrested on the mountain of Dilj on 15 January 1955 (Lojzo Buturac, "Tuna Buturac 17 godina bez slobode (1945.-1962.)", *PZ*, (10) 2000, no. 102, September 2000, 43-44). Some Crusaders remained in hiding until mid 1960's (Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, p. 230).

¹⁷ Radelić gives a list of a large number of Croatian guerrilla groups in the only monograph about Crusader movement to date (Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 482-489).

almost all regions populated by Croats: from Subotica to Konavle and Boka Kotorska, and from Čakovec and Varaždin to Gorski Kotar and Rijeka.¹⁸ There were no such groups in Istria, primarily because the situation there was unique, including the unsolved border dispute with Italy.¹⁹

Clearly, the behaviour of members of Crusader groups – and opponents of the new regime generally – was to a large extent conditioned by the expectations and rumours that the West would attack the Yugoslav communist regime. According to the record of an interview of a Crusaders' harbourer, Jago Tomac, the Crusaders in the area around Bjelovar were trying to convince people "that the whole world is fighting against communists and that they are supported by England and America, because the situation like this cannot last".²⁰ Indeed, apart from the English, the most frequently mentioned allies and supporters were the United States of America.²¹ In the words of Father Ivo Grgurev, who in 1945 was sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment because of three articles published in a newspaper from Šibenik, *Hrvatski Jadran*, in which he supported the revival of NDH, "In those days everybody believed that the English and the Americans would arrive soon No one could even imagine then that the Western superpowers, which ruled the seas and oceans, could allow the Soviet bear to put its paws into the Adriatic Sea...".²² One of the participants in the events remembers

¹⁸ There were Crusaders on islands as well: Ivan Pandol from the island of Hvar joined Crusaders in 1945 (Cf. Ivan Pandol, "Neka mi se jave supatnici!", *PZ*, (9) 1999, no. 83: 30). In March 1948, the District Court in Subotica convicted three groups of Croats who were accused of being members of an "Ustasha and Crusader terrorist organization"; by the judgement no. K-95/48 of 17 March 1948, Vojislav Pešut and nine more persons, with three priests among them, were convicted; by the judgement no. K-104/48 of 24 March 1948, Marija Čović and eight more persons, also with three priests among them, were convicted; and by the judgement no. K-108/48 of 25 March 1948 Tome Vukmanov and six more persons were convicted (Marija Dulić, "Da se ne zaboravi: subotički proces 1946.", *PZ*, (9) 1999, no. 87: 47; Ante Sekulić, "Dvije subotičke presude (1948. i 1972.).", *PZ*, (10) 2000, no. 102: 37-40). Radelić also wrote about one case of Crusader operations near Srijemska Mitrovica (Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, p. 427).

¹⁹ Those Croatian priests in Istria who refused to take the side of the winners of the war were called by the Partisan Communist leadership "Ustashes" and "fascists", and many priests were killed during and after the war. (More in Ivan Grah, *Istarska crkva u ratnom vihoru (1943.-1945.)*, 2nd ed. (Pazin, 1998)). However, the regime realised that the support of the clergy was necessary in settling the territorial dispute with Italy, so it made some major concessions, and the clerical factors, having in mind the importance of settlement of the territorial issue, expressed their readiness to make concessions, creating a situation in which the two sides, although they opposed one another on principle and ideologically, could temporarily tolerate each other. (Cf. Stipan Trogrlić, "Uz 60. godišnjicu ubojstva Sluge Božjega Miroslava Bulešića", (1), *Glas Koncila*, (46) 2007, 2 September, p. 25)

²⁰ AHDPZ, Record of the interrogation of Jago Tomac, made on 21 April 1947 at the office of the district UDB department for the district of Bjelovar.

²¹ Cf. Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, passim. M. Grabarević describes the situation then, "There was much talking about all that. People were whispering that Crusaders would get help from abroad, that Americans would send weapons, ammunition and food, and that our people would return together with them." (M. Grabarević, *Kalvarija hrvatskog vojnika...*, p. 104)

²² I. Grgurev, *Svjedočanstvo*, 162

the spirit of the Posavina Crusaders and says the following: "Our companions were encouraging us and promising help from abroad, we did not know from where; we only strongly believed in that, and that kept us going".²³

It can also be said that in the creation of numerous illegal groups an important role was played by the belief that the Croatian political emigration had pulled itself together and organised itself well, and that it planned an armed return to the homeland in order to establish an independent Croatian state.²⁴ In pursuit of that goal, the emigration was to rely on numerous Crusaders' groups. At the same time, the political emigration, which started organising itself already in summer 1945,²⁵ saw in the Crusader movement the key lever for its return to the homeland. In order to organise and link together the Crusader groups, the former state leadership issued an order to launch an operation called *10th April*. The operation had tragic consequences for many of its immediate participants.: On 22 July 1948, the Supreme court of the People's Republic of Croatia (NRH) (decision no. K-1/48-141 of 22 July 1948) sentenced Ljubo Miloš and twenty persons, to death by hanging, and twenty-three to death by shooting squad. The sentences were executed on 31 August 1948.²⁶ In addition to weakening the emigration, the regime made use of that operation, or, more precisely, of the trial against its participants, to create a "black legend" regarding Croats.²⁷ Nonetheless, Operation 10th April is one of the most important episodes of the Croatian resistance against Communist Yugoslavia because it demonstrated the patriotic resistance of a significant part of the Croatian population and the role in that struggle played by the emigration.²⁸ It also gave hope to the opposition

²³ I. Lučić-Paroković, *Uvijek uz Hrvatsku*, 21

²⁴ Cf. Ladislav Hajba, "Prekodravski seljaci u 'Akciji Deseti travanj'", *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 121: 31. The author ascribes such idea to the rumours the Yugoslav intelligence service was spreading intentionally, for the purpose of provoking a fight with their political opponenets.

²⁵ Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 45-46

²⁶ AHDPZ, Indictment of the Public Prosecutor's Office of FNRJ no. K-124/48 of 17 June 1948, Judgement of the Supreme Court of NRH no. K 1/48-141 of 27 August 1948 and the Record on the execution of death penalty no. Pov. 1573-III-1-1948 of 31 August 1948.

²⁷ K. Katalinić gives a very interesting analysis of that trial and its role in the creation of the Jasenovac myth, as well as in the turmoils in the Yugoslav Communist leadership in light of the Resolution of the Information Bureau, in the manuscript, *Poslijeratna politička emigracija: od Bleiburga do Republike Hrvatske*.

²⁸ There were also other attempts to organise uprisings, in which members of the Croatian political emigration participated The Tolić-Oblak group, which consisted of nine guerrilla members (Ilija Tolić, Josip Oblak, Dražen Tapšanji, Mirko Fumić, Krešimir Perković, Rade Stojić, Stanko Zdrilić, Branko Podrug and Vlado Leko) came to Croatia on 7 July 1963. Armed members of the so-called Bugojno Group, nineteen of them led by brothers Ambroz and Adolf Andrić, crossed the border between Austria and Yugoslavia on 20 June 1972. Most were killed in the following weeks; three of them (Mirko Vlasnović, Đuro Horvat and Vejsil Keškić) were captured, tried, and sentenced to death and executed on 17 March 1973. Young Ludvig Pavlović was the only one who lived to see the liberation of Croatia in 1991, but in that year, he was killed in suspicious circumstances at Studeni Vrili near Posušje as a participant of the Homeland War. In autumn 1974, Ivan Matičević and Mate Prpić entered Croatia, and were killed on 29 October 1974 near Gospić.

groups and anti-Yugoslav circles in the homeland, which was crucial for a continued resistance to the regime, and it strengthened the pro-Western orientation of the Croatian liberation struggle. Although one may assume that the communist authorities spread such rumours themselves,²⁹ the regime was obviously convinced that the “help from the outside”, that is from the West, was really coming. Consequently, the authorities detained suspicious individuals who might serve as a link between the West (or at least Western intelligence services) and Crusaders within Croatia.³⁰

Objectively speaking, the Crusader movement was destined to fail from the beginning because abroad the political environment was such that the dissolution of Yugoslavia and establishment of independent Croatia were out of question; and within the country mass murder and a brutal repression was narrowing the field of operations from day to day. Therefore, the Crusader Movement should be viewed as a symptom of a “national” frame of mind by many Croats and as evidence of the continuity of the struggle for state independence, rather than as a movement that could have revitalized Croatian politics or created a new Croatian state.

The Crusader Movement was commonly considered to be a form of “Ustasha guerrilla”.³¹ That might have been true in some areas, such as Lika, Dalmatinska Zagora, and Herzegovina, where most of Crusaders really were former members of the armed forces of NDH.³² However, in other areas, such as Hrvatsko Zagorje and Podravina, most Crusader groups consisted of former HSS followers.³³ For example, in late 1945, members of the

²⁹ One should bear in mind that such rumours did have an influence and incited some people to assist the Crusaders, e.g., “He even told us (...) that in Brodski Varoš and nearby villages aid is gathered in food and clothing, and that people are responding more and more, because they are convinced that Americans will help their armament”. (M. Grabarević, *Kalvarija hrvatskog vojnika*, 119)

³⁰ A characteristic example was an American citizen of Croatian origin, Ivana J. Pintara, who was sentenced to four years, because – according to *The New York Times* in January 1947 – he was “serving a representative of international reaction” and “encouraging Crusaders and terrorist gangs in hope that they would get help from abroad” (I. J. Pintar, *Četiri godine*, 70)

³¹ “Namely,” Radelic write, “it is not only that many among them were Ustashes, the main reason is that the basic tone to Crusaders, their military and political orientation, apart from all the changes brought about by the fall of NDH, was given by members of the Ustasha movement and army”. Still, the author is aware that the Crusader movement was not entirely homogenous. “Undoubtedly,” he notes, “among Crusaders the most numerous were members of the armed forces of NDH who immediately withdrew into the woods. They were followed by those who escaped out of fear of arrest, but also fugitives from camps and deserters from the Yugoslav Army”. (Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 17, 197.)

³² A. Vukić, *Velebitski vukovi*, title; Ivan Gabelica, “Križari – hrvatski pokret otpora u Imotskoj krajini 1941.-1945.”, (I) *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 122, May 2002, 33-38; (II) *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 123, June 2002, 27-31. Radelić published a report of the First Herzegovina Crusader Brigade dated 27 July 1946, in which the members were referred to as “Ustashes”, and which also says that 75 percent of Croats were still devoted to Pavelić and Ustasha movement, around 20 percent to Maček and HSS, and only 5 percent to “Tito and the partisan movement” (Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 97, 108-109.)

³³ L. HAJBA, “Prekodravski seljaci...”, title

HSS in the Virovitica area formed the "Propaganda Department of the 2nd Crusaders' Division". The group consisted of forty-nine members, one of whom was killed in the woods; another 28 were arrested, and in November 1946, the Divisional Military Court in Osijek sentenced twenty-one members.³⁴ According to the trial transcripts, the organisation had distributed anti-regime leaflets and tried to establish links to Crusader groups. They were also accused of spreading the news that "within the emigration there is a new Croatian government led by Maček and Butković, and that they were fully supported by the English, and that they will come to Croatia soon to take over power. .that an army of 80,000 soldiers was formed abroad, and that 12,000 of them have already been transferred to Bilogora, and that these units, together with the Crusaders, fight against today's authorities".³⁵ There are also other cases where the HSS was accused of having links to the Crusaders.³⁶ In some places, Crusader units included deserters or members of the Yugoslav Army whom the Partisans had recruited by force but who had escaped into the woods for various reasons. There were many such cases in Konavle.³⁷ On 28 January 1947, the Bjelovar Divisional Military court, with its seat in Osijek, pronounced sentences against Vjekoslav Mikuličin and five of his comrades, who had, as members of the Yugoslav Army, established a group which had attempted to contact the Crusaders and then to escape into the woods or emigrate, in order to fight the Yugoslav state order. Five of the six accused came from southern Croatia, and had been Partisans since February 1945.³⁸ According to a Catholic nun, who was sentenced for assisting Crusaders, there had been both Muslim and Orthodox members among the Crusaders in Bosanska Posavina.³⁹

Many of the judgements against members of the Crusader Movement and those who aided them have been preserved.⁴⁰ It is not possible to list them

³⁴ AHDPZ, Judgement of the Divisional Military Court in Osijek no. 18005-18026/46 of 27 November 1946 against Ladislav Hajba and others

³⁵ AHDPZ, Judgement of the Divisional Military Court in Osijek no. 18005-18026/46 of 27 November 1946. Cf. L. Hajba, "Promičbeni odjel II. križarske divizije", *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 124/125: 54-62.

³⁶ Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 159-166.

³⁷ Letter of Dr. A. Franić to the author, dated 2 October 2004. Cf. A. Franić, *Povodom šezdesete godišnjice smrti Pera Bakića, vođe konavoskih križara*, *PZ*, (15) 2005: 24-26; Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 414-415.

³⁸ AHDPZ, Judgement of the Divisional Military Court in Bjelovar – now in Osijek, no. 61-83/47 of 28 January 1947.

³⁹ Enver Mehmedagić, "Razgovor sa sestrom Zvezdanom u tišini samostanskog ozračja", *PZ*, (6) 1996 (Zagreb, June 1996, 35. According to Ante Vrban's report from November 1946, there was only one percent of Muslims among Crusaders in BiH (Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 103-104)

⁴⁰ Apart from court archives, copies of numerous judgements are stored at the Croatian Association of Political Prisoners and at the Administrative Commission of the Government of the Republic of Croatia which is competent to decide on the status of former Croatian political prisoners in administrative procedure. The author is in the possession of all the judgements that are cited in the text.

all here, but all of them are similar in certain respects. During the summary investigative proceedings the suspect did not have any right to legal aid, and trials were very short—their sole purpose to confirm the content of the investigation in front of judges, who then convicted and sentenced the accused. When attorneys were present, they limited their defence to requesting a more lenient punishment. But sentences were not only pronounced quickly, punishments were generally draconian. In many cases, the accused did not appeal, and when they did, the appeals were dealt with very quickly as well.⁴¹

The judgments of Yugoslav military and criminal courts in the proceedings against Crusaders and harbourers regularly referred to the confessions of the accused. But there are very few cases where the judgement mentions the manner in which those confessions were obtained. One such case occurred in Zadar, where the District Court (the judgement K-62/1948 of 30 December 1948) sentenced Petar Sidić and four more persons for organising themselves during 1947 in order to assist Crusaders in the Zadar hinterland and for acquiring some weapon for that purpose. The judgment also notes that the first accused wanted to emigrate in 1948 “in order to commit offences against the people and the state”, but was prevented from doing so by “the state security organs”. All of the accused acknowledged during the trial that they had signed the investigation records, but they also said that they had done so “because they were required” to do so. The first of the accused, Petar Sidić, was, according to the judgement, “a former Ustasha, who makes an impression of an obdurate and persistent man, even though he admits that he was not beaten, wants to explain his confession by saying that he was tied and put into solitary confinement”. The fourth accused, Dušan Golem, “claims at first that he was confessing whatever they asked him to confess out of fear, and then, during the interrogation and confrontation he was terrified and unconscious because of malaria he was suffering from at the time, so that he does not remember what he was saying”, while the second accused, Pavle Knežević, “says that he did not confess what the record says[,] the interrogator wrote whatever he wanted, and he was also beaten”. In short, the men claimed that their confessions were coerced. Whether this was in fact the case, the court did not accept their claims and let their confessions stand.⁴²

⁴¹ For example, in case against Franjo Ozmeć and others, an attorney from Zagreb Dr. Ivo Maraković, who defended the accused, received the first-instance judgement on 2 August 1948. The date of the appeal is not known, nor whether there were more appeals by other accused, but the second-instance judgement was pronounced already on 17 August 1948, two weeks later. (AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court for the City of Zagreb K-246/48 of 29 July 1948; Judgement of the Supreme Court of NRH Kž-1211/1948 of 17 August 1948). In the case against the Zagreb Franciscans (*Gaon Operation*), the period between the first-instance and the second-instance judgement was sixteen days. That was still an improvement, compared to the proceedings in 1945, where as a rule, trial, judgement and execution (in case of capital punishment) happened in a single day.

⁴² AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Zadar no. K-62/1948 of 30 December 1948.

Indeed, to accuse investigative bodies of abusing suspects could result in a heavier sentence. For example, Rev. Baldo Mladošević was sentenced by the District Court of Dubrovnik (Case K-33/48 of 22 June 1948) to seven years of imprisonment with force labour because he had stated during a session of his trial open to the public that the investigative bodies in another case had employed “repression and fascist methods, except for castor oil”.⁴³

Although even rarer, there are also examples where it was indirectly confirmed that there had in fact been no enemy (Crusader or “harbourer”), but rather only an OZN or UDB set-up. For example, on 17 June 1947, the District Court in Varaždin (judgement K-188-191/1947) convicted Franjo Kraljić and four others of having sheltered and fed Crusaders during the first half of 1947. All the accused pleaded guilty, except for the fourth accused, Mirko Hadela, who insisted that it had not been Crusaders who had appeared at his door, «but second lieutenant Čačko Josip, Svedić Vlado squad leader and his brother Ivan».⁴⁴

The aim of such frame-ups was at least twofold. On the one hand, they eliminated political opponents; on the other, they created a justification for repressive measures and a more vigorous persecution of political opponents. A vivid example was the terror introduced in late 1947 in the small Western Herzegovinian town of Posušje. In November 1947 UDB staged a meeting of Crusaders and their supporters in Posuški Vinjani, and killed several people without trial. Immediately after that, in December 1947, a state of emergency was declared and a court-martial convened in Posušje, due to the UDB claim that they had documents proving the existence of what in fact was a fictitious Ustasha brigade *Kralj Tomislav* (King Tomislav). The inhabitants of the municipality were confined in an improvised camp, and some families were expelled to distant areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Seven people were convicted in summary proceedings. Around 360 more were detained and subjected to brutal investigation, while several dozen were convicted to long imprisonment.⁴⁵

In the neighbouring Duvno municipality the population was relocated or confined in collection camps, so that their connection with the Crusaders would be severed. That was a relatively common measure taken by the communist authorities; Radelić lists numerous examples of relocation of families and even entire villages to Lika, Senj, Muć, Dubrovnik, Zagreb and Cazinska Krajina.⁴⁶ The same occurred in Kiseljak, Busovača, and elsewhere, where families of Crusaders from Konavle and potential “harbourers” were forced-

⁴³ Facsimile in: B. Mladošević, *Gospodin je bio moja snaga*, 73-75.

⁴⁴ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Varaždin K-188-191/1947 of 17 June 1947. In a letter addressed to the author on 8 June 2003, Nikola Jagar confirmed that that really was a provocation, which was not a rare phenomenon at the time, because “UDB members disguised as Crusaders would visit individuals[,] requesting food by using force[,] so that they could accuse people of feeding Crusaders”.

⁴⁵ Josip Jozo Suton, *Posuški žrtvoslov* (Zagreb, 1998), pp. 100-110, 259 and others

⁴⁶ Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 215-216.

ly relocated to Korčula.⁴⁷ Despite such measures, it took the regime five years to eliminate the Croat armed resistance, and several more to exterminate the last remnants of the Crusader Movement.

Political resistance: illegal organisations

Although it was destined to fail from the beginning, the Crusader movement was not completely suppressed until the trial of Božidar Kavran and his collaborators. However, that did not mark the end of organised resistance to the Yugoslav state and the Communist regime; according to Dr. A. Franić, who was twice accused of anti-state activities, “throughout the country, illegal Croatian organisations were appearing simultaneously, such as HOP, ODRA, TOHO, TIHO, etc. They were springing up like mushrooms. Some of them were entirely new, and others were fabricated by UDB, so that it could convict and liquidate, according to them, the prominent opponents”.⁴⁸ Already in the early years of existence of Communist Yugoslavia, members of numerous illegal groups found themselves in its dungeons, and S. Radičević mentioned them in passing: HIP (Croatian Illegal Movement), ABC (Anti-Bolshevik Centre), ABB (Anti-Bolshevik Bloc), HOP (Croatian Liberation Movement), HROP (Croatian Republican Movement), TOHO (Secret Organisation of Croatian Youth), ODRA (The Avengers of Dravograd) and others.⁴⁹ Most of them are entirely unknown to both lay people and experts, so that only systematic research in the future, based on scattered archival materials and fading memories will reconstruct the chronology and scope of resistance of these groups of Croatian patriots. When analysing and assessing their activities one should bear in mind the harshness and brutality of the regime’s repression. It influenced the secrecy of their activities, and thus the availability of authentic and reliable documents. At this moment it is only possible to give general indications, mostly based the regime’s indictments and judgements (which must be treated with a certain reservation), and a handful of memories by survivors of the post-war repression.

Still, based on such scarce documents one can safely say that the struggle for Croatia’s state independence did not die in May 1945. It continued through other methods of struggle, as protagonists adjusted their activities to take into account both relevant factors in internal politics and developments in foreign relations.⁵⁰ For example, the Military Court of the Command of the City of Zagreb (judgement 2059/45 of 25 August 1945) convicted twelve students of the Home Guard Ensign School who had been accused of organising an enemy group that had held meetings and planned activities such

⁴⁷ A. Franić, «Povodom šezdesete godišnjice smrti Pera Bakića», title

⁴⁸ A. Franić, “Sustavno prikupljanje građe za noviju hrvatsku političku povijest”, *PZ*, (8) 1998, no. 78, September 1998, 8-9

⁴⁹ S. Radičević, *Robijaševi zapisi*, 154.

⁵⁰ In her memoirs, Marica Stanković mentions expectations of the female political prisoners in Požega from “Andersen troops, Greece, Corea...” (M. Stanković, *Godine teške i bolne*, 63)

as reading and distributing enemy leaflets. The students had also allegedly been preparing to escape into the woods. With the first-instance judgement, five of them were sentenced to death. Three (Vladimir Ključec, Željko Hamperl and Ivan Javor) were executed, but the sentences of two (Stjepan Brajdić and Rudolf Sambolec) were commuted to 20 years of imprisonment. Six others (Josip Bašić, Anton Bačani, Baltazar Katić, Petar Jurišić, Nikola Vrkljan and Tomislav Javor) were sentenced to long prison terms.⁵¹

Only few weeks after the fall of the NDH, in late May and in June 1945, a group of Catholic and Muslim high-school students from Zagreb, aged between 15 and 17, organised a Secret Organisation of Croatian Youth (TOHM). According to the indictment against them, at the incitement of Željko Gjučić they were organised in groups of five in order to spread propaganda against the Democratic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, to establish connections with Crusaders in the woods, to support armed resistance by attacking members of the Yugoslav Army, and to perform acts of sabotage. According to the memories of the founding members, the allegations in the indictments were mostly correct.⁵² The organisation was created under the impression of the fall of NDH, in light of the terror that followed in Zagreb, where mutilated bodies were dumped in the Sava River daily, and in the hope that the Crusaders' resistance in the woods would succeed. TOHM was to have a supreme council and be organised in interconnected cells. Members wrote slogans on buildings, reproduced leaflets, and collected medical supplies for the Crusaders. In an attempt to seize weapons, they also wounded a Yugoslav Army captain named Globočnik. During the arrest the police seized some weapons.

Most of the members were arrested in August 1945. The regime could not identify all members of the organisation, but it tried to link it to the Kaptol and Archbishop Stepinac, even though neither had any relations with the organisation. The trial was held on 16 December. Due to illness and the fact that the summons could not be delivered, the proceedings against Vlado Gračanin and Mato Tafra were conducted separately, and the District Court for the City of Zagreb (judgement Kz-466/45 of 17 December 1945) convicted Željko Gjučić, Milivoj Krema, Omer Stunić, Milan Novaković, Stanko Šumanović, Gašpar Bolković, Tefko Saračević, Ante Novaković, Marijan Kereković and Budimir Boras. One of the organisation's members, Mladen Gereš, emigrated with his family. The founder of the organisation died in 1947 in prison from untreated meningitis; Bolković got seriously ill soon afterward in prison and barely survived, Novaković lost a kidney in Lepoglava, and Krema ended in a psychiatric hospital.⁵³

⁵¹ Miroslav GAZDA, "U ime naroda Jugoslavije: Bio sam šesti na popisu na kojem su petorica osuđena na smrt", *PZ*, (15) 2005: 32-33

⁵² Tefko SARAČEVIĆ – Omer Stunić, "Tajna organizacija hrvatske mladeži (TOHM): Jedan od prvih organiziranih otpora komunističkom režimu 1945.", *PZ*, (11) 2001, no. 116: 35-38

⁵³ AHDPZ, District Court for the City of Zagreb, Judgement no. Kz-466/45 of 17 December 1945. Cf. T. SARAČEVIĆ – O. Stunić, "Tajna organizacija.; Marijan Kereković, "Sjećanja

In Hrvatska Kostajnica, on 23 September 1945, thirteen members of the 16th Youth Brigade *Joža Vlahović* of the 34th Yugoslav Army assault Division were arrested, accused and convicted on 17 October 1945 of enemy propaganda and alleged planning to emigrate.⁵⁴ In mid 1945, *The Anticomunist Action of Croatia* was established in Zagreb, which consisted of few high-school and seminary students. The group in fact did not exist as an organisation in the full sense of the word; it was just a group of young men who made a stamp, which then was used on threatening letters and leaflets they made and distributed themselves for five years without being discovered.⁵⁵ On 24 January 1946, again in Zagreb, a trial started against a group called Antiboldshevik Movement (ABP). From the material available, it is not clear why the group had been established, who its members were, or how it functioned. But it is clear that it existed before November 1945, when some of its members were arrested.⁵⁶

During these years, political trials against individuals and groups were held in all parts of Croatia. Indicative of the ubiquity of such trials is a letter of the Department of the Interior of the city of Dubrovnik (no. 5795/46 of 2 April 1946) which informed the Department for Execution of Sentences at the Ministry of the Interior that “the following persons had been escorted to the male institution for forced labour in Slavonski Brod (...):

1) Perković Josip and Krasovac Boris, to serve a sentence of forced labour and deprivation of liberty for 20 years each, by act no. 4511/46, and pursuant to effective judgement and the letter of the District Court in Dubrovnik Kzp. 77/45

2) Palunčić Vicko, to serve a sentence of forced labour and deprivation of liberty for 15 years, by act no. 3905/45, and pursuant to effective judgement and the letter of the District Court in Dubrovnik Kzp. 49/45 of 26 November 1945

3) Cetinić Franko, to serve a sentence of forced labour and deprivation of liberty for 10 months, by act no. 5465/46, and pursuant to effective judgement and the letter of the District Court in Dubrovnik Kzp. 23/46 of 15 March 1946

na TOHM, lipanj – kolovoz 1945.”, *PZ*, (11) 2001, no. 116: 39-41; Gašpar Bolković, “Čelija 19 – sjećanje na TOHM”, (I.), *PZ*, (11) 2001, no. 116: 42-44 (II), *PZ*, no. 117, : 43-45; Milan Novaković, “Još o skupini T.O.H.M.”, *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 119: 28. M. Novaković – M. Kereković – G. Bolković, “Optužnica – dopuna sjećanja na T.O.H.M.”, *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 123: 39

⁵⁴ Ante Prlić, “Robijaš broj – 3562”, in: P. P. Cota, *Svjedočenja*, 261-263

⁵⁵ Stjepan Plantak, “Proces protiv zagrebačkih bogoslova i njihovih poglavara”, (I), *PZ*, (14) 2004, no. 143:21 and no. 147: 38-39. Plantak was one of the convicted in the trial against the Zagreb theology students in 1950-51.

⁵⁶ J. Bejuk, *Sjećanja logoraša*, title In his text about the events in the Stara Gradiška prison in 1951, Hauptfeld mentions Ivica Orešković aka Šana from Zagreb who, as an ABP member, was sentenced to twenty years of prison (Hrvoje Hauptfeld, “Argentinci”, in: S. Radičević, *Robijaševi zapisi*, 175)

4) Vrlićak Ilija, to serve the sentence of forced labour and deprivation of liberty for 12 years, by act no. 5494/46, and pursuant to effective judgement and the letter of the District Court in Dubrovnik Kzp. 75/45 of 19 March 1946

5) Zadro Filip, to serve the sentence of forced labour and deprivation of liberty for 1 year, by act no. 5841/46, and pursuant to effective judgement and the letter of the District Court in Dubrovnik Kzp. no. 3/46 of 26 March 1946.

6) Sambunjak [Sambugnach] Tomislav, to serve the sentence of forced labour and deprivation of liberty for 7 years, by act no. 5495/46, and pursuant to effective judgement and the letter of the District Court in Dubrovnik Kzp. no. 5/46 of 19 March 1946 (...)

The addressee is also asked [for information] whether the minors will also be sent to the correctional institution in Gospić, according to the above order, without individual orders, because we now already have 3-4 cases of effective judgements for senior minors who should be taken to the correctional institution.»⁵⁷

In autumn 1945, an organisation called “The Crusader Movement of Dalmatia Zadar” was established in Zadar. Its members were arrested in July 1946, and with the judgement of the District Court in Zadar Stup. 78/46 of 19 November 1946, its members Stjepan Babić, Tihomir Čulina, Tomislav Mitrović and Mario Musap were sentenced to a lengthy imprisonment. The court considered it a proven fact that the organisation was established with the purpose to fight “against the existing situation in the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia”, for which its members had meetings, planned assassinations of two “representatives of the people’s authorities”, and planned afterwards to escape across the sea and join the enemies in emigration.⁵⁸

In autumn 1945, a group of high-school students from Zagreb led by Anđelko Capek established the Secret Organisation of Croatian Youth (TOHO). The immediate reason for the groups’ creation was in reaction to the so-called school conferences, where the Party’s “storm troops” fought students who disagreed with Communist ideology.⁵⁹ Members of the organisation wrote combative patriotic slogans on the walls, distributed leaflets and took down Tito’s photographs from classroom walls, and so on.⁶⁰ Because

⁵⁷ AHDPZ, Documentation about Tomislav Sambugnach, escort of convicts to location of sentence serving – letter of Department of the Interior of the city of Dubrovnik no. 5795/46 of 2 April 1946

⁵⁸ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Zadar Stup. 78/46 of 19 November 1946. S. Radičević, “Ni mrtvom nisu dali mira”, *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 118: 30-31; *Idem*, Sjećanje na Marija Musapa, *PZ*, no. 146: 41-42. Radičević says that the organisation was founded in 1945, while the judgement says that it was “mid this year”, that is 1947.

⁵⁹ Željko Rukavina, “Sudbina ‘TOHO-a’ (O tajnoj organizaciji hrvatske omladine)” *ZatvorenikZatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 10-11: 21-25 Cf. orbituary to Ž. Rukavina in *Zatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 19: 46

⁶⁰ Ž. Rukavina, “Sudbina ‘TOHO-a’”.

of the strong impact on the Croatian and foreign public of the Shepherd's Letter of the Conference of Bishops dated 20 September 1945, and later the trials against Lisak and Archbishop Stepinac, TOHO members also copied and distributed Stepinac's defence speech, which made a strong case for the right of the Croatian nation to its own state and condemned the communist regime.⁶¹

In the night between 23 and 24 April 1947, TOHO planned to take down Tito's pictures in all high schools in Zagreb, but UDB found out about the operation at the last moment and blocked the operation in all schools but one. Police agents immediately arrested some of the participants. As the organisation was organised in closed threes, most members did not know each other. In the course of the investigation the authorities arrested about a hundred high-school students from Zagreb. Two organisation members were killed: the founder A. Capek, who had taken refuge in Slavenska Orahovica, was executed on 9 May 1947, and Marijan Hrvoj, who was arrested during the April operation and disappeared during the investigation. Despite the use of torture to extract confessions, the authorities managed to indict only twelve persons: Radovan Grgec, Mišo Zorenić, Velimir Celić, Srećko Vitković, Lovro Rogina, Branko Pilepić, Željko Rukavina, Zvonimir Zorić, Vlatko Božinović, Vladimir Šterman, Anto Zorić and Zora Heger. Only Heger was legally an adult. The trial in (case K-404/47) was held between 18 and 21 August 1947 at the District Court in Zagreb, and all the accused, even though all but one were under age, were found guilty and sentenced to prison with forced labour for a period of one to five years. Pursuant to the usual practice at the time, by the decision of the Ministry of Education, those students were banned from all schools in Croatia. Zora Heger, the only adult, was sentenced to six years of incarceration.⁶²

In late 1945, the authorities eradicated two organisations close to the HSS. By the judgement of the Division Military Court Zagreb (no. 739/46 of 30 April 1946) Antun Maček, Branko Kunaj and Zdenko Beg were found guilty of organising, in November 1945, in cooperation with Ivan Bernardić, a "group of enemy elements consisting of more than a hundred people, mostly university and school students", with whom they had held meetings and incited anti-state activities, while one part of the organisation (Branko Horvatić, Đuro Filipš, Branko Nikolčić and Drago Horvatić) established communication with the Ustasha and Crusader elements in the woods.⁶³ In the case against Marijan Peštaj and others, on 5 February 1946, the Military Court of the Command of the Zagreb Military District handed down a judgement

⁶¹ Mišo Zorenić, "Viđenje suđenja nadbiskupu Stepincu Miše Zorenića" *ZatvorenikZatvorenik*, (3) 1992, no. 21 : 40

⁶² Ž. Rukavina, "Sudbina 'TOHO-a'"; Zvonimir Zorić-Zorko, "Kardinal Stepinac" *ZatvorenikZatvorenik*, (3) 1992, no. 22-23: 34-38; Z. Zorić, "Zora Heger rođ. Nikić (10. 4. 1899. - 23. 1. 1994.). In memoriam" *ZatvorenikZatvorenik*, (3) 1994, no. 34: 38

⁶³ AHDPZ, Judgement of the Division Military Court in Zagreb no. 739/46 of 30 April 1946.

(number Vkr. 147/50) by which Peštaj was sentenced to death, and his eight collaborators (Krešimir Cervelin, Zvonimir Hmelina, Dragutin Marković, Milena Tijardović, Anđela Tedeško, Irgand Vrkljan, Martin Rukavina and Marija Vorin) to long prison terms for establishing an illegal organisation which had distributed anti-Yugoslav leaflets and enemy propaganda in general, and had connections abroad, to which pamphlets had been sent to be published in the foreign press. The organisation was also linked to another “terrorist organisation” called the Anti-Bolshevik Movement (ABP).⁶⁴

In late 1945 or early 1946, an organisation was established in Osijek called the Society of People’s Resistance.⁶⁵ It consisted of young men and women who were determined to oppose the Yugoslav communist regime, not only with propaganda and political means, but also through the use of violent methods. By the judgement of the District People’s Court in Osijek (Stup.. 165/46 of 8 June 1946), the founder and leader of the organisation, Mirko Hubak, was sentenced to death by hanging, while several members— Ivan Obertlik, Aleksandar Konečnik, Josip Nejašmić, Dževad Špica, Slavko Kudrna, Teodor Liska, Rudolf Jakševac, Dragutin Obal, Zlata Kolčić, Dragica Vukašinić, Nikola Horvat and Kata Skokić—were sentenced to long prison terms. Following an appeal, the Supreme Court of the People’s Republic of Croatia changed the sentence for Hubak to death by shooting squad, and slightly reduced the sentences of the others.⁶⁶ Hubak was executed immediately. Špica was also almost killed, and Liska died during the slaughter of prisoners in Lepoglava in July 1948.⁶⁷

During the first post-war academic year, the first illegal organisation was created at the University of Zagreb by a law student, Slavko Radičević, acting with five other university students, Jerko Artuković, Branko Jerčinović, Milan Cahunek, Branko Tomljanović and Slavko Geršić. In the first half of 1946, they founded the Croatian Republican Liberation Movement (HROP). The organisation was created to work for a “free and independent Croatian state, and [to] struggle against Yugoslavia and the communist regime.” According to Radičević, the “Croatian state was important to us and not the regime that had ruled in NDH. . . . HROP was originally our organisation established in 1946 without any foreign models or links with any other organisation from abroad.”⁶⁸ The founders of the organisation found “supporters everywhere: at faculties, among high-school students, craftsmen, workers, and farmers.”⁶⁹ They drafted temporary instructions for members

⁶⁴ AHDPZ, Judgement of the Military Court of the Command of the Zagreb Military District no. Vkr. 147/50 (sic!) of 5 February 1946.

⁶⁵ The judgement mentions another name: “National Uprising Committee.” But, members of the organisation did not use that name.

⁶⁶ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District People’s Court in Osijek Stup. 165/46 of 8 June 1946; Judgement of the Supreme Court of NRH no. K-1994/46-2 of 10 August 1946.

⁶⁷ Slavko Kudrna, “Društvo narodnog otpora (Osijek)”, *PZ*, (8) 1998, no. 78: 10-15 Cf. A. Franić, *KPD Lepoglava*, 141-150.

⁶⁸ S. Radičević, *Robijaševi zapisi*, 17.

⁶⁹ Also, 18. Interestingly, Radičević says in the autobiographic “Bilješka o piscu”, in the book

and wrote various manifestos calling for resistance to the regime. In their search of Radičević's rented room, the police found a number of compromising documents on the basis of which a resolution on the situation in the country was to be drafted and sent to the American Ambassador. HROP members planned to inform the Western powers about the real situation in Yugoslavia. The organisation did not have weapons, but the programme principles and a leaflet entitled "Braćo i sestre!" (Brothers and sisters), as well as other materials, were seized.⁷⁰

The public activities of HROP were limited to laying wraths on the grave of the Radić brothers, and the grave of Dr. Ante Starčević in Šestine.⁷¹ Although these were limited, under the circumstances they required considerable courage, and the group's internal organisation was both serious and ambitious. The founding members were given various tasks, such as intelligence service, propaganda, communication with Crusaders, and the number of members organised in "trojkas" increased significantly. On 19 June 1947, the prosecutor of the military command of the city of Zagreb indicted twenty-one persons from this group: thirteen university students, two high-school students, two skilled workers, and three female workers (indictment no. 127/47).⁷² Contrary to the common practice at the time of reading or simply summarising the indictment at the beginning of the trial, in this case the charges were delivered to the accused. Nonetheless, draconian sentences – for the founders between ten and twenty years of prison with hard labour – were pronounced after a secret three-day trial; and the judgement of the Military Court of the Command of the city of Zagreb (no. 420/47 of 23 August 1947) was given to the convicts only after 1990, and even then only in the form of excerpts.⁷³ It is worth noting that, despite the size of the group, none of the accused yielded under UDB investigators' pressure, nor did they accuse one another during the trial, an indication of their firmness and determination.⁷⁴

The prisons in Stara Gradiška, Srijemska Mitrovica, Lepoglava, Zenica, Foča, and Mostar, and the camps in Sisak, Velika Pisanica, Gospić, and elsewhere, were full of convicted Croatian youth in those days. In the Penitentiary and Correctional Home in Lepoglava alone, some 12,500 political prisoners served their sentences between 1945 and 1990.⁷⁵ The vast majority of them were Croats, who were also the majority of inmates in other pris-

of his memories, that a group of university students "in June 1946" founded "the first student organisation Croatian Republican Liberation Movement 'Hrvatski domobran'" (Also, 305.)

⁷⁰ Also, 16-18, 22-23, 33-38

⁷¹ Also, 18-19. Cf. interview with S. Radičevićem in: *Svjedočenje dvanaestorice*, 33-44

⁷² Also, 28-32. Beside six founders, accused were: Ivan Ceglec, Blanka Tomljanović, Matija Adžić, Dragutin Piškur, Ivan Đikić, Viktor Kavalir (Zlata Poslončec, Katica Sabljak, Vlatka Tomljanović, Milica Glavaš, Franjo Hranueli (Zdravko Korać, Eugen Medek, Dragutin Menšik and Ivan Petroci.

⁷³ Also, 32-36.

⁷⁴ Also, 33-34.

⁷⁵ A. FRANIĆ, *KPD Lepoglava – mučilište*, 10.

ons in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to some sources, by late 1947 around 5,000 prisoners were confined in Lepoglava. The majority of them were political prisoners, and most of these were members of the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP).⁷⁶ Memoirs of political prisoners indicate that members of various groups of that organisation served their sentences in Dubrovnik, Split, Šibenik, Zadar, Osijek, Vinkovci, Vukovar, Našice, Slavonski Brod, Bjelovar, Sisak, and Lepoglava.⁷⁷ However, such memoirs cannot be considered fully reliable because in 1946, there was an organization called HOP in several regions of Croatia but available evidence is inconclusive as to whether this was a single organisation with branches all over Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, or whether these were separate organisations, which by chance had the same name, or to which the Yugoslav authorities gave a name that was recognisable and easy to remember.

HOP appeared in official records for a number of years following the war,⁷⁸ and it reappeared in the late 1950's and early 1960's.⁷⁹ What is certain is that an organisation with that name was founded in Split in 1946. During the second half of 1940s, cooperation started between illegal opposition groups from Zagreb, Dubrovnik and Split. Their representatives would meet occasionally to exchange experience and coordinate activities.⁸⁰ Members of the Zagreb organisation remained free the longest, and these were gathered around Velimir Terzić. Members of the Dubrovnik group were arrested first. In the spring of 1947, UDB arrested around ninety people from Dubrovnik and the surrounding areas. After an investigation, two trials were held. The one in the District Court in Dubrovnik began on 24 May 1947 against Stjepan Wollitz, Miško Belotti, Stojan Šutalo, Ilija Butković, Ivo Mihaljević, Bruno Safret and Father Frano Vučetić, who were accused of creating in mid 1946 "an illegal Ustasha organisation HOP in Dubrovnik". On 26 May

⁷⁶ That is not an emigration organisation with the same name, which was founded on 8 June 1956!

⁷⁷ Thus TOHO member Ž. Rukavina who was tried again in 1951 lists HOP groups chronologically, by the time of arrival to serve sentence in Lepoglava. (Ž. Rukavina, "Sudbina 'TOHO-a'", 24).

⁷⁸ Čedomil Jurić was sentenced to years of imprisonment, by the judgement of the District Court in Mostar no. 70/50 of 25 July 1950, because he had been aware of the existence of the HOP organisation in Konjic, and had not reported it to the authorities. (Č. Jurić, "Robijašnica 'Foča' kazneno-popravni dom", *PZ*, (5) 1995, no. 41: 19-20. The author's texts shows that he was in fact convicted for being a member of the organisation, but one cannot be certain if that had been the case.)

⁷⁹ V. Vukojević says that, during one of the first interrogations on the island of St. Grgur 1959, he had been asked if he had been an Information Bureau supporter or HOP supporter, and continues: "I have never heard of HOP, and I knew that I was not an IB, and therefore I said: 'HOP'." (Anonim, "Prve poslijeratne demonstracije u Zagrebu. Razgovor s gospodinom Vicom Vukojevićem" *ZatvorenikZatvorenik*, (1) 1990, no. 7, November 1990, 7-9) Ivan Gabelica, who came at almost the same time to Sv. Grgur, confirms that that was the first time he heard of HOP, but the administration and the IB supporters referred to prisoners as "HOP members" (orig. *hopovci*). Mocking form of that name was "popovci" (referring to priests; translator's note). (Ivan Gabelica in statement given to the author on 5 October 2006).

⁸⁰ Statement of Dr. A. Franić given to the author, 6 October 2007.

Šutalo was sentenced to death, and the other four to long prison terms. But even before the trial ended, Wollitz was shot from behind in a Dubrovnik high school.⁸¹ Safret was transferred to another group of seventeen accused, who were brought before the same court in July. They also were accused of founding in the second half of 1946 in Dubrovnik “a terrorist-fascist organisation, the so called HOP”. They were charged with spreading propaganda by writing slogans (“ŽAP” - Živio Ante Pavelić!, or Long live Ante Pavelić!) and distributing leaflets (e.g. “Katolička mladeži!”, or “To the Catholic Youth!”), and copying and distributing the defence speech of Archbishop Stepinac from his trial in Zagreb. They had also supposedly made a list of members of SKOJ (Young Communist League of Yugoslavia) and government representatives, and sent some of them threatening letters. In addition, they were charged with seeking to establish links with the Crusaders and collecting aid for them. Some of the organisation’s members were also charged with having planned to emigrate. By the judgement of that Court, on 16 July 1947, the following people were sentenced to long imprisonment: Joško Radica, Augustin Franić, Antun Tutman, Bruno Safret, Đuro Bender, Ivo Katić, Đuro Novaković, Ivan Radović, Ivo Grbić, Stijepo Radić, Ivo Kraljić, Damjan Pavlović, Julijan Vidman and Kate Lisa. The first accused, Josip Franić, managed to escape and flee the country.⁸² Although both groups were convicted for helping to found HOP and taking part in the work of organisation with that name, the accused only found out the name of their organization at the trial, which strongly suggests that UDB gave the name to the group.⁸³

The Split group gathered around Zvonimir Marković, which cooperated with the Dubrovnik and Zagreb groups, was not destroyed by UDB until 1948. But, a year earlier, an organisation was founded in the Dalmatian city that was called the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP). Its members originated from different parts of Dalmatia, and wrote anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist slogans on buildings. They also wrote, copied, and distributed leaflets calling for the restoration of a Croatian state, if necessary through the use of armed struggle, and they urged people to help the Crusaders in the woods. The group’s most spectacular operation was undoubtedly the raising of an 18 metre-long Croatian tricolour on the mountain of Marjan on 10 April 1947, the anniversary of the proclamation of the NDH. A few days later, some of the group were arrested. The Public Prosecutor of the Dalmatian District filed an indictment (no. I-60/47) on 20 May 1947 against Frane Bettini, Ivica Bavčević, Nikola Penso, Jelka Betica, Vlado Zelinak,

⁸¹ “Suđenje članovima ilegalne ustaške organizacije ‘HOP’ u Dubrovniku”, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 29 May 1947; “Osudjeni su članovi terorističke organizacije ‘HOP’ U Dubrovniku”, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 30 May 1947; A. Franić, “Povodom pedesete obljetnice podmuklog ubojstva Stjepana Wollitza”, *PZ*, (7) 1997, 43.

⁸² AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court u Dubrovniku K-66/47-28 of 16 July 1947. Judgement of the Supreme Court of NRH Kž-1673/47-2 of 30 August 1947; “Osuđena je druga grupa pripadnika i saradnika t. zv. organizacije HOP u Dubrovniku”, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 31 July 1947.

⁸³ Letter of Dr. A. Franić to the author, dated 2 October 2004.

Borica Jonić, Ruža Anić, Katica Šanić, Jakov Kirigin, Tomislav Karaman, Vjekoslav Matijević and Frano Tenta. All of the accused were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment by the District Court of Central Dalmatia on 27 May 1947.⁸⁴ In the course of the investigation, the accused were physically abused and forced to confess to actions that they had not committed. The authorities were especially eager to force them to confess that the Bishop of Split and Makarska, Kvirin Klement Bonefačić, was a member of HOP, but they did not succeed in doing so.⁸⁵ Still, in the course of the proceedings, it was established that the first five accused had founded the organisation and given it the name HOP and that they had been planning to found a similar organisation in Makarska. It seems that an organisation with the same name also existed in Žežvica, a village between the Omiš hinterland and Imotska Krajina. According to the court record, especially detrimental for the first accused, Bettini, was his “entirely specified [spontaneous?] confession” that he had “been ready to assist anyone struggling for a free Croatia, and a state like that was to be realised in the so-called NDH”.⁸⁶

In the autumn of 1946, at the High School in Vinkovci, a secret organisation named BAH (“Bog – Ante – Hrvatska, or God – Ante – Croatia”) was established. The group consisted of the then underage Slavica Vinković, Zlatko Posavac, Tomislav Lukačević, Miroslav Herceg and Tomislav Janošić. These students evidently established their group spontaneously, without any outside instruction or influence, and they interpreted their political program as a synthesis of the writings and practice of Ante Starčević, Stjepan Radić and Ante Pavelić. They limited their activities to writing slogans and distributing leaflets with anti-Yugoslav contents. During the investigation, they were also pressed to confess that they had links to the Catholic Church, which apparently did not exist. All of them were convicted at the District Court in Slavonski Brod on 20 June 1947 (judgement no. III-K. 236/47).⁸⁷ At the opposite part of Croatia, in Zadvarje, a village on the Cetina River, a secret group called the Organisation of Croatian Catholics was founded in 1946. It was eradicated in 1947, when many of its members were convicted at the staged trial in summary proceedings in the middle of the village on 16 May 1947.⁸⁸ According to Yugoslav data, in 1947 alone, thirty-eight “enemy

⁸⁴ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court of Central Dalmatia of 27 May 1947 (Due to reckless copying, the copy of the judgement at AHDPZ does not have a case number). In the book of A. Franić about KPD Lepoglava, the name of Frano Tente is followed by the number of case in which he was convicted K-133/47. Tente was murdered or died in Lepoglava on 8 November 1948, at the age of 20. (A. FRANIĆ, *KPD Lepoglava – mučilište*, 74, 8.) Zelinka's destiny seems to be the same. (Vjekoslav MATIJEVIĆ, “Nakon pola stoljeća”, *PZ*, (7) 1997, no. 63: 46)

⁸⁵ Marija Katica Šanić, “Imala je samo 10 godina,” *Zatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 12-13, April-May 1991, 51-53

⁸⁶ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court of Central Dalmatia of 27 May 1947

⁸⁷ Zlatko POSAVAC, “Zbog ideala slobodne Hrvatske vinkovački gimnazijalci suđeni 1947.,” (I), *PZ*, (9) 1999, no. 92: 40-42

⁸⁸ Josip Krivić, “Žrtve i odpor šestanovačkoga kraja,” (II), *PZ*, (10) 2000, no. 99: 42-43

organisations” with more than 500 members were eradicated. Twenty-eight of those organisations were in Zagreb.⁸⁹

The Information Bureau Resolution and an unexpected conflict between Moscow and Belgrade were undoubtedly interpreted among Croat opponents of the Yugoslav regime as an important event, no matter whether they were already imprisoned or were still illegally active. Yugoslavia’s international position was weakened, and the regime felt insecure.⁹⁰ However, it soon became clear that there would be no armed conflict and that the West would start providing even more support to Yugoslavia. With the trial of Kavran and others, it had become clear that the Crusader movement had been defeated as well. However, an illegal organisation, that appeared and functioned after the Information Bureau Resolution took on the task to link together the resistance groups in the country with the political emigration, probably due to the fact that it became clear that the Crusader movement would not overthrow the regime.

One of those organisations was eradicated in Zadar in mid 1948. It seems that it had been founded in 1947 in Bibinje, and consisted of Danijel Kero, Marijan Kovačević, Pavao Bugarija, Tomo Sorić, Križan Šimunić, Ante Lisica, Roko Lisica and Frane Sikirić. They had spread propaganda against Yugoslavia and the communist regime, and tried - but failed - to establish contact with Crusaders. According to the judgement of the District Court in Zadar (K-61/48 of 31 December 1948), they had tasked themselves with gathering weapons and explosives in order to carry out sabotage operations, because they were expecting an armed conflict and the overthrow of the Communist regime, given Yugoslavia’s weakened international position.⁹¹

In 1948, six Zagreb University students, one of whom turned out to be a spy for the Yugoslav intelligence service, founded an organisation which wrote a number of manifests and leaflets condemning the Yugoslav regime and calling for the separation of the People’s Republic of Croatia and the creation of an independent Croatian state. The members gathered some weapons as well, but - according to one of the group members, Ratimir Mlinarić - far fewer than were claimed at the trial.⁹² In general, it seems that university students did not accept the regime, nor did high-school students. There was a group of students of the High School in Nova Gradiška in 1947-48, who tried to undermine the regime. They called themselves the HSS Youth (OHSS). For the purposes of struggle against the Yugoslav regime, they held

⁸⁹ Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, p. 224.

⁹⁰ One of the participants in large “Derventa Crusader and collaborators’ group” tried in 1947 and 1948 remembers the significance attached by the prison administration and prisoners themselves to the IB Resolution and its echoes. (Petar Jukić, “Derventska križarska i suradnička skupina suđena 1947. i 1948.”, *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 120 (Zagreb, March 2002, 35-37, no. 121 (Zagreb, April 2002, 35-37.

⁹¹ AHDPZ, Judgement and the Decision of the Supreme Court of NRH no. Kž-36/49-3 of 22 February 1949

⁹² *Svjedočenje dvanaestorice*, 58-69.

meetings, exchanged literature, and wrote slogans and leaflets; they even managed to collect a small quantity of weapons. They were arrested in April 1949. Soon afterwards, fourteen accused were brought before the District Court in Osijek; thirteen of whom were between 17 and 20 years of age. All were charged with conspiracy against the Yugoslav State, and all were subsequently found guilty and sentenced to a total of 99 years of incarceration.⁹³

In 1948, an organization which called itself the Croatian Liberation Homeland Action (HODA) was founded in Zagreb.⁹⁴ As early as 1946-1947, a group of young people from Split and the surrounding area established various forms of cooperation with like-minded youth from Zagreb and Dubrovnik. In 1948, at the initiative of Anto Bačić from Zagreb, the group was bound together more tightly by Zvonimir Marković within an illegal organisation called the Croatian Liberation Movement – The Avengers of Dravograd (HOP-ODRA).⁹⁵ This organisation also worked in *trojka*, or groups of three, whose members did not know each other, including the main group, which consisted of Josip Dominis, Mijo Glavina and Ante Tomić.⁹⁶ During the proceedings, Marković confessed that he had accepted the proposal of (the previously convicted) Bačić to spread the activities of this organisation throughout Croatia. He had gathered his first associates, and the organisation started to spread. Dominis confessed during the investigation “that the aim of the organisation was to overthrow the existing system and that that was the purpose of his joining and managing the organisation in the city of Split». The organisation members had apparently met on several occasions in order to plan operations. According to the trial record, they had exchanged “fascist literature”, that is, different politically unsuitable books, mostly those published in NDH; they had spread anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist propaganda, and they had tried to establish branches of their organisation in other Dalmatian towns. They were also accused of having gathered funds for the families of political prisoners, and of having started to gather weapons. It was established during the trial that they had making plans in the event of international conflict, into which Yugoslavia would also be dragged, and there were indications that some members planned to go abroad in order to establish contact with Croatian political emigrants.

⁹³ Memoirs of one of the members of this group, Augustin Tomlinović, were published under title *Iz uspomena jednoga hrvatskog robijaša* posthumously in *Politički zatvorenici* in 1997/98.

⁹⁴ Zvonimir Puškaš: *Hrvatski demokratski nacionalizam (Organizirani otpor jugokomunističkoj tiraniji 1948.-1990. godine)* (Zagreb, 1997). Letter of Z. Puškaš to the author (no date, October 2005).

⁹⁵ Interestingly, the Indictment of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Dalmatian District no. «B» 247/49 of 7 November 1949 consistently speaks about an organisation called HOP-ODRA, while the Judgement of the District Court in Split K-86/49-7 of 3 December 1949 persistently mentions a “terrorist organisation HROP-ODRA”, where that acronym, according to the Court, meant: Croatian Liberation Movement – Avenge for the home guards executed in Dravograd”.

⁹⁶ One of the most important people in that organisation, Mijo Glavina, met Bačić as late as in 1990's. (Mijo Glavina in conversation with the author, 17 September 2007)

All of the accused (Marković, Dominis, Glavina, Tomić, Marin Špika, Marin Zulin, Petar Glavina, Šime Perković and Mirko Benzon) were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment by the decision of the District Court in Split (no. K-86/49-7 dated 3 December 1949).⁹⁷

According to one of the accused in the Split trial, who had been arrested earlier, in 1945 for distributing HSS anti-communist leaflets, the investigative and the criminal proceedings in general in 1949 were much more brutal than in 1945.⁹⁸ The explanation for the difference lies not only in a more sophisticated repressive system, but also in a general atmosphere of fear and violence after the Information Bureau Resolution and the elimination of fractions among the communist circles. The authorities undoubtedly felt they needed to show to the Communist world that they were not arresting only those Communists who were supporting the Information Bureau Resolution, but others as well.

Almost at the same time that the organisation called HOP-ODRA was dissolved, the Great Croatian Crusader Brotherhood (VHKB) was eliminated as well, and that was formally established in the second half of 1949. The organisation was active in the Livno and Duvno area, in Sarajevo, Vukovar and Zagreb, and consisted of a considerably large number of members.⁹⁹ Its aim was to establish an independent Croatian state; in deciding on the structure of the organisation the leadership was guided by the idea that “an imminent conflict between the West and East European countries” would bring about “an attack on our country, when today’s social system in FNRJ would be changed”. The organisation had its book of rules and the members had to take an oath. Apart from propaganda work, they were gathering money, and the plan was to collect weapons as well, while awaiting an international conflict, which would bring about the fall of Yugoslavia. For the purposes of the preparation of the operation, some leading members planned “a journey abroad in order to establish connections with those who fled the country and gather funds for the organisation”.¹⁰⁰ Twelve VHKB members from Livno municipality (Draško Đogić, Dražen Tadić, Srećko Jurkić, Mladen Sučić, Josip Kajić, Nikola Bobetić, Boško Gabrić, Josip Džaja, Jozo Pašalić, Ivica Jurkić, Jozo Zrno and Franjo Nevistić) were convicted in a separate trial in July 1950, also in Mostar.¹⁰¹ The Military Court in Zagreb, (judgement

⁹⁷ AHDPZ, Indictment of the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Dalmatian District no. «B» 247/49 of 7 November 1949; Judgement of the District Court in Split K-86/49-7 of 3 December 1949

⁹⁸ Josip Bepo Dominis, “Ti nećeš imati potomstva... Od zla roda nek ne bi poroda”, (2), *PZ*, (6) 1996, no. 48, 34-37.

⁹⁹ By the Judgement of the District Court in Mostar K-148/50 of 1 September 1950, some of the leaders were sentenced to prison with forced labour: Ljupko Gotovac to 20 years, Nikola Jukanović to 18 years, Jozo Nevjestić to 16 and Žarko Radnić to 15 years. (AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Mostar, K-148/50 of 2 September 1950).

¹⁰⁰ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Mostar, K-148/50. Cf. Ljubomir GOTOVAC, “Bilo je to 1950. godine”, *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 120 (Zagreb, March 2002, 32-34).

¹⁰¹ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Mostar K-132/50 of 25 July 1950.

no. 672/50 of 23 December 1950) found Andrija Mrzlečki, Mirko Matuza, Ivan Lončarić, Milan Medved, Ivan Košanski, Stjepan Paska, Ivan Tušek and Cvetko Šipuš guilty for establishing, in 1948-49, and illegal enemy association with the purpose to establish connections with emigrants and make a plan for a forceful liberation of political prisoners from the Penitentiary and Correctional Home (KPD) Lepoglava.¹⁰² In early 1950's, the group of Zagreb continued with its activities, and that group had already cooperated with the like-minded from Split and Dubrovnik. That core, despite the arrest and conviction of A. Bačić, continued its illegal work. Its key person was a student from Zagreb Velimir Terzić, who originated from the Split hinterland. However, they also were arrested, and Terzić and four of his comrades were convicted in November 1954.¹⁰³ Their connection with the like-minded in Split and Dubrovnik was confirmed by the crucial prosecution witness Ico Gjenero.¹⁰⁴

At that time, after another escalation of international tensions and the 1953 Berlin Uprising, new groups of Croatian high-school and university students were formed, and they continued offering resistance. However, their activities are outside the scope of this text. Memoirs by political prisoners' mention an illegal group *Hrvatsko bratstvo naprijed* (Croatian Brotherhood Forward), which allegedly was formed in Mostar in 1949, but there are no any other data about it.¹⁰⁵ The same applies to the group called Croatian Progressives, which was also formed among Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina in late 1940's.¹⁰⁶

Apart from the opposition illegal groups already noted, it seems that there were many cases where organisation in the full sense of the word did not exist. Sometimes, individuals would refer to non-existing organisations just to make an impression on the like-minded,¹⁰⁷ but much more often, the communist authorities would bring before the court many groups of mostly young people, who were expressing their opposition to the new regime.

¹⁰² A. Franić, "S onu stranu kaznioničkog zida, (II) Pokušaj stvaranja organizacije za oslobođenje hrvatskih političkih osuđenika iz KPD Lepoglava", *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 126, September 2002, 23-27. The text of the judgement was published at the same place.

¹⁰³ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Zagreb Ko-937/954-38 of 8 November 1954.

¹⁰⁴ He was testifying in 1954 against Terzić's group in Zagreb and also against the Dubrovnik group which included Frano Kolumbić, Niko Pušić, Augustin Franić, Damjan Pavlović, Trpimir Macan, Miho Valjalo, Petar Žuvela and Ante Jelavić.

¹⁰⁵ A. Mijatović, "Umro je fra Stjepan Lovrić, jedan iz plejade starih zeničkih robijaša", *PZ*, (8) 1998, no. 81, December 1998, 49-50

¹⁰⁶ Slavko Pandžić, "Priča iz zeničkog kazamata," *Zatvorenik*, (4) 1994: 34-35; Vjekoslav Lujo Lasić, "Priča iz zeničkog kazamata. Osvrt na napis gosp. Slavka Pandžića" *Zatvorenik*, (4) 1994, June-July 1994, 50

¹⁰⁷ A purported Croatian Political organisation from Slavonski Brod addressed in a letter one of the prominent Crusader leaders, Major Ante Vrban, in June 1946. The organisation obviously did not exist; behind that name was Josip Dujić, president of the Chamber of Trade in NDH, who wanted to instal himself as the leader of the Crusader Movement. (Cf. Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 100-101)

In such cases, they were regularly accused of forming illegal groups, which justified stricter sentencing. But other aims were achieved that way as well: providing proof of orthodoxy for Moscow and accusing the West of undermining the new, communist system.

For instance, on 24 October 1945, the Military Court of the 34th Assault Division in Petrinja sentenced seven young men to death (Boro, Brajković, Ilić, Mahler, Marić, Pećarina, Ramljak), based on charges that they had formed an enemy conspiracy group propagating Ustasha principles and inciting the struggle against the People's Liberation Movement (NOP), although some of them did not even know each other. On 26 November of the same year their sentence was commuted, by the decision of the Military Council of the Supreme Court of DFJ, into a lengthy imprisonment.¹⁰⁸ The ten accused, including Slavko Fužinac, who were arrested in mid 1945 and subsequently convicted by the Military Court of the 43rd Division in Slovenia on 31 December 1945, obviously did not create any organisation; at most, they were merely a group of malcontents. Despite that, one of them, Anton Bujan, was sentenced to death and executed.¹⁰⁹

On 6 February 1947, the Divisional Military Court in Bjelovar convicted a group which had purportedly been organised in mid summer 1946 by Zvonimir Balta, Luka Vidaković and Stanko Perić. Its members were accused of spreading anti-Yugoslav propaganda, seeking to convince people that the Crusaders were really a formidable force, and predicting that a conflict between Yugoslavia on one side, and the USA and the Great Britain on the other, was imminent, and that its result would be the fall of Yugoslavia and the return of Maček to power.¹¹⁰

On 14 June 1949, the District Court in Dubrovnik sentenced Marinko Garbati and Branko Brkanović to prison. For the minor, Bogdan Jurišić, the Court prescribed the protective measure of tight control, based on the charges that in October 1948 they had formed an organisation which had been designed to undermine the existing order, and that they had written on several occasions on the walls of Dubrovnik slogans such as "Long live Ante Pavelić!" and "a slogan by which they were mocking SKOJ". They were also accused of "spreading a slogan on the imminence of war[,] [of having] hailed the power of capitalist states[,] [and of having] emphasising especially the power of the English navy and atomic bomb. . . ."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ AHDPZ, Certificate of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia dated 11 December 1991 on the Judgement of the Military Court of the Assault Division II of JA 938/45. Cf. Tomislav Pećarina, "Sjećanje na Veliku Pisanicu (Prof. Petru Grgcu)", *PZ*, (8) 1998, no. 76/77: 64-65. In a letter addressed to the author, dated 4 March 1998, T. Pećarina says that his main "sin" was the fact that he had been editor of magazine *Među nama* during the war.

¹⁰⁹ *Svjedočenje dvanaestorice*, 46-55

¹¹⁰ AHDPZ, Judgement of the Division Military Court in Bjelovar, no. 107/47 of 6 February 1947

¹¹¹ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Dubrovnik no. K-13/49-5 of 14 June 1949; Judgement of the Supreme Court of NRH no. Kž-470/49-3 of 15 July 1949

In November and December 1950, a group of Croatian young men from Podravina were arrested and accused of being members of the “Ustasha and a clerical organisation” and charged with undermining in an organised manner the new system, by writing slogans and distributing leaflets. The indictment that was filed with the Military Court in Belgrade charged Stjepan Šarampovec, Ivan Ljubić, Ignac Grahovac, Stjepan Dolenc, Božidar Vrtiprah, Đuro Petras, Stjepan Šandor, Ivan Furdek, Anđelka Ranilović, Milka Balaš, Ivan Radotić, Bolto Duga, Slavko Kumrić, Stjepan Igrec and Stjepan Seličanec, a known pioneer of the Great Crusader Brotherhood in Međimurje, “with forming an illegal Ustasha organisation in Novigrad Podravski, between November 1946 and November 1950, with gathering enemy elements, spreading enemy propaganda, gathering and distributing enemy propaganda material, writing enemy slogans on walls, tearing election banners and collecting weapons, all with the aim of forceful overthrowing the existing state and social order in the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia”,¹¹² One of the accused later recalled that it was true that some of the accused had been meeting and speaking critically about the new system, and even writing slogans (mostly “ŽAP,” Long live Ante Pavelić!) and ending their correspondence with the phrase, “Za Poglavnika i Dom spremni!” (For the Leader and the Homeland We Are Ready!). However, he also insisted that many of the accused had not known each other, let alone belonged to a joint organisation.¹¹³ Nonetheless, all fifteen were convicted in a one-day trial on 14 April 1951 and then sentenced to a total of 134 years of incarceration.¹¹⁴

Nor was there an organised group in the case of nine university students who were charged with rebellious singing of patriotic songs in the streets of Zagreb following the football match between Zagreb’s *Dinamo* and Belgrade’s *Crvena zvezda*, in December 1951. The authorities condemned the singing as a “chauvinist manifestation” directed at “inciting national hatred and frictions among the nations of Yugoslavia”. Although it was more likely just a spontaneous expression of resistance to Croatia’s position in communist Yugoslavia, all the university students were found guilty and sentenced to prison.¹¹⁵

The existence and activities of all of these groups, as well as of many other groups that have not been discussed, clearly demonstrates the strong resistance that the communist Yugoslav regime faced among Croats. A report written by Josip Špiranec, warden of the Lepoglava penitentiary, and sent

¹¹² Stjepan Dolenc, “Nakon 38 godina u zagrljaju sa supatnicima”, *PZ*, (7) 1997: 38-39

¹¹³ *Idem*, “Uspomene Štefa Dolenca, (VI) (Zatočenik broj 2655”, *PZ*, (10) 2000, no. 100-101.

¹¹⁴ *Idem*, “Uspomene Štefa Dolenca, (VII)”, *PZ*, (10) 2000, no. 102.

¹¹⁵ Convicted were: Josip Majić, Vlade Vicić, Šime Dujmović, Ivan Rudec, Branimir Miletić, Boško Rožić, Vjekoslav Mikuličin, Vlade Palijan and Josip Božićević. (AHDPZ, Indictment of the District Public Prosecutor’s Office Zagreb no. K-122/1952 of 16 January 1952; Judgement of the District Court u Zagrebu K-35/1952 of 30 January 1952 and the Judgement of the Supreme Court of NRH Kž-444/1952-2 of 4 April 1952. Cf. memoirs of one partaker: Vlado VIDIĆ, “Zagrebačke demonstracije 1951,” *PZ*, 11/2001, no 111 and 112-113.

on 30 May 1952 to the Head of the 3rd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of NRH suggests the same thing. He wrote that numerous convicts “incite Ustasha idea among those who were convicted for having Ustasha idea. They promise the return of Pavelić and Maček[,] saying that persistence against the enemy will be rewarded. They are spreading chauvinist hatred because of the unsolved national issue, stating that the Croatian nation is oppressed. They say that farmers are forced to join communes, while workers are poorly paid, and the prices are going up constantly, and that all that indicates a revolution in the country soon. They are even settling scores by use of force with some convicts who show signs of improvement, they call them snitches; they isolate and mock them. The result is that those who would be corrected have to be passive...”¹¹⁶

The Catholic Church as a Resistance Factor

The regime decided to use the fight with the Crusaders as an opportunity to fight another, maybe even more dangerous enemy – the Catholic Church. The Church was a lump in the regime’s throat. Although it was obvious already during the war that both Chetniks and communists were systematically attacking Catholic priests,¹¹⁷ it took decades to precisely establish the names of priests and monks killed by the Yugoslav Communists during and after the war.¹¹⁸ According to the incomplete data, that number reached 287 priests, 201 monks, 20 nuns, and 54 seminary students, students of theology and lay people—all together 601 victims.¹¹⁹ Hundreds of priests were tried in staged trials and subjected to ruthless persecutions.¹²⁰ A large number of Croatian Catholic priests and monks emigrated also because of the repression exercised against the Church by the Yugoslav Communist regime.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ A. Franić, *KPD Lepoglava – mučilište*, 92

¹¹⁷ As early as 1943, Draganović gave a list of Catholic priests, monks and nuns killed by Chetniks. Krunoslav Draganović, “Hrvatske biskupije. Sadašnjost kroz prizmu prošlosti,” in: *Croatia sacra. Arhiv za crkvenu poviest Hrvata*, year 11-12, no. 20-21, Special no. on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Independent State of Croatia, published by the Croatian Theological Academy in Zagreb (Zagreb, 1943), pp. 101-102, 119, 123- 124.

¹¹⁸ The Shepherd’s Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Yugoslavia dated 20 September 1945 especially pointed to the unprecedented persecutions of Catholic priests: 243 killed, 169 in prisons and camps, and 89 missing. There were also 19 killed clerics, 3 killed monks and four nuns.

¹¹⁹ J. Batelja, *Crna knjiga*, LI. Cf. A. Baković, *Svećenici žrtve rata i poraća*.

¹²⁰ Cf. excerpt from bibliography in note 7.

¹²¹ At the Croatian State Archive there is a copy of the Memorandum sent to the USA President Eisenhower on 15 June 1954 by 143 Croatian Catholic priests in emigration. The Memorandum analyses the position of the Croatian nation and the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia, and contains a number of documents attached. At the same place there are data on repressive measures taken by UDB on the occasion of that Memorandum, as well as the “List of Croatian Catholic priests in emigration” with 1083 names. (One should note that not all Croatian priests in the West had the status of political refugees; many worked as missionaries with Croatian political and economic emigrants.) Priests who were charged with misdemeanours were listed by name, as well as 17 priests who were deprived of Yugoslav citizen-

Because of the power and the reputation of the Church among the Croatian people, and because of its supranational significance, Communists tried to discredit it with accusations that it was actively fighting against or even coordinating the fight against the regime.¹²² Priests appeared among the accused at the first "Crusader" trials. For instance, Father Ivo Bjelokosić, together with Jakov Andrijuci, was convicted on 18 June 1945 for distributing leaflets with contents against the state and providing assistance to Crusaders.¹²³ The fact is that Bjelokosić and some other priests from Dubrovnik opposed the attempt of the Partisan authorities, after the slaughter of a large number of priests and civilians, to organise a celebration of St. Blaise's Day in Dubrovnik and thereby present themselves as advocates of freedom of religion.¹²⁴ Father Sebastijan Šantalab was convicted in 1945 in Bjelovar, together with Zvonimir Žagi, for distributing leaflets calling Croatian people to rebel that had been seized from Žagi.¹²⁵

The Shepherd's Letter published by the Conference of Bishops on 20 September 1945 sped up a clash that was probably inevitable, owing to the irreconcilable antagonism between the Communist regime and the Catholic Church in Croatia. Vladimir Bakarić announced a new, even harsher campaign against the Church on 15 December 1945, and CK KPJ and CK KPH agreed on the arrest of Archbishop Štepinac.¹²⁶ During the preparations for the arrest and the trial of Štepinac, which was to be the ultimate battle with the Church, they invested all their efforts in trying to diminish the position and reputation of the Church. Therefore, at the time when the Crusader Movement was at its peak, a large number of trials against Crusaders or those who harboured them involved Catholic priests, monks and nuns as well.

Convicted with a number of people at the District Court in Bjelovar on 10 December 1945, the nun Florentina Cerovski was sentenced to fifteen years of prison, for having received a letter via another accused nun Nenada Zvonar that had been sent by a Crusader leader Martin Nemeč. Cerovski apparently sent several packages of medical material to Crusaders in the woods after receiving the letter.¹²⁷ Thirty persons were arrested in

ship (Croatian State Archive, f. 310 – Commission for Relations with Religious Communities (in further text: HDA, KOVZ), box 341.

¹²² In September 1945, Andrija Hebrang said in the pre-election speech in Zagreb: "Riding on clerical reaction's coat-tails are Maček followers, Crusader, Ustashas, and even Chetniks..." (Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Hebrang. Iluzije i otrežnjenja* (Zagreb, 1996), p. 145)).

¹²³ Judgement of the Military Court for Dalmatian District – Chamber at the Command of the Southern Dalmatia District no. 164/45 of 18 June 1945 published in the book of Bjelokosić's memoirs: I. Bjelokosić, *Svećenik...*, pp. 161-162

¹²⁴ Statement of Dr. A. Franić given to the author, 6 October 2007

¹²⁵ Zvonimir ŽAGI, "Moja mladost provedena u robijašnicama Jugoslavije: I. dio – Osvrt na logor Velika Pisanica", *PZ*, (6) 1996, no. 57: 21-22

¹²⁶ Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, pp. 138-139; More in: Miroslav Akmadža, "The Position of the Catholic Church in Croatia 1945-1990", *Review of Croatian History*, 2/2006, no. 1: 89-115.

¹²⁷ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Bjelovar K.z. 239/45 of 10 December 1945. Notification of KPD Slavonska Gradiška no. 6591/1954 of 29 November 1954.

early January 1946 in Bosanski Brod and the surrounding area. Two nuns were among them, although, according to a subsequent testimony of one of them, they had nothing to do with the other accused. During the investigation prior to the trial, the nuns were evidently pressed to accuse the parish priest in Bosanski Brod of conspiracy against the state.¹²⁸ After the sentence was pronounced on 1 June 1946, the two nuns were transferred to Zenica to serve their time, where they joined another twenty-eight nuns who had been convicted on similar charges: fourteen from Sarajevo, two from Žepče, three from Banja Luka, two from Doboj, three from Mostar, and one from Brčko.¹²⁹

There was also an attempt to link the Archbishop of Zagreb, Dr. Alojzije Stepinac, directly with the Crusaders, owing to the fact that he had received a prominent Ustasha official, Erih Lisak, at the Archbishop's residence. Also Lisak had gained admittance to the Archbishop by using a false name, the prosecution argued that two letters from General Ante Moškov had been received at the Kaptol, that medications had been collected for Crusaders by the Archbishop's staff, and that a Crusader flag had been blessed. During the trial, both the prosecutor and the defence alluded to other cases in which priests had allegedly helped Crusaders.¹³⁰ Indeed, there were many such cases.¹³¹ Some of the accused in the trial against the Archbishop of Zagreb were sentenced to death, and others to many years of prison; Stepinac himself was sentenced to sixteen years of incarceration.

At the time that the verdict against Stepinac was handed down, dozens of trials against other priests were underway. In Sarajevo, the Military Court of the 27th Shooting Division (no. 203/45 of 30 December 1945) sentenced thirteen persons, led by Zvonko Lakatoš, to death, and nineteen more to years of imprisonment. All of these accused were charged with founding an organisation on the instructions of a Catholic priest, Father Čondrić, in order to help Crusaders operating in north-western Bosnia. Apart from printing and distributing anti-regime leaflets ("Down with bloody Stalin, down with bloody Tito, long live Croatia!"), the accused had allegedly been preparing help for Crusaders who were planning an attack on Tuzla and liberation of a large number of political prisoners held at the prison there.¹³² In this case,

¹²⁸ E. Mehmedagić, «Razgovor sa sestrom Zvezdanom».

¹²⁹ Sister Zvezdana (Jelka) VUK, «Kako su me odgajali za uhadu», *PZ*, (6) 1996, no. 57: 39-41.

¹³⁰ Milan Stanić [editor], *Suđenje Lisaku, Stepincu, Šaliću i družini, ustaško-križarskim zločinima i njihovim pomagačima* (Zagreb, 1946).

¹³¹ Cf. Z. RADELIĆ, *Križari...*, pp. 139-153.

¹³² AHDPZ, Judgement of the Supreme Court of FNRJ, II no. 75/46 of 6 February 1946. By the second-instance judgement, the sentences were made a bit more lenient, and the capital punishment was confirmed only for Z. Lakatoš, while for the others it was changed into twenty and ten years of incarceration. That judgement, and the first-instance judgement of the Military Court of the 27th Shooting Division, no. 203/45 of 30 November 1945, with detailed memories of one of the convicts was published in: T. Obrdalj, *Jedan život*. Cf. Anton Ferenc – T. Obrdalj, «Anton Bilela – In memoriam», *PZ*, (11) 2001, no. 119: 45.

an organisation actually had been founded in the summer of 1945, and its members had sought to establish contact with the Crusaders.¹³³ In tandem with this trial, the Military Court in Tuzla convicted Father Efrem Ćosić, Father Ljudevit Josić, Father Ljudevit Bralić and seven civilians, who were charged with conspiring against the state and providing assistance to the Crusaders.¹³⁴

At the District Court in Varaždin a trial against Dragutin Gazivoda and others was held between 20 August and 7 September 1946. Among the ten accused, there were four priests, who were convicted of having links to the Crusaders and the Croatian emigration, of gathering weapons, and so on.¹³⁵ Father Anselmo Canjuga was convicted in late May 1947, together with a large group of civilians, for helping the Crusaders.¹³⁶ Although physical violence against those accused of such crimes was routine, the possession, reading and distribution of the Shepherd's Letter led to exceptionally brutal physical violence against the accused.¹³⁷ On 26 May 1947, the District People's Court in Zadar convicted (judgement no. K-85/47) Father Eugen Konatić and five other persons were charged with engaging in activities against the people and of spreading false propaganda and undermining the state and the regime.¹³⁸ In March 1948, the District Court in Subotica convicted three groups of Croats who were accused of being affiliated with an "Ustasha and Crusader terrorist organisation" (judgment no. K-95/48 of 17 March 1948). On 24 March 1948, Vojislav Pešut and ten other persons were convicted, among them three priests (judgment no. K-104/48), Marija Čović and eight more persons were also convicted, among them three priests (judgement no. K-108/48 of 25 March 1948), as were Tome Vukmanov and six more persons.¹³⁹ Two rifles, three bombs and 26 bullets had been planted at the home of Father Ratimir Kordić, a parish priest in Drinovci in Western Herzegovina, who was suspected of assisting Herzegovinian Crusaders. As a result, he was sentenced in 1949 to six years of incarceration.¹⁴⁰

Government prosecutors also sought to link the Catholic Church to other forms of resistance in addition to the Crusader movement. There were attempts to link the Kaptol in Zagreb with the TOHO organisation,

¹³³ T. Obrdalj, *Jedan život...*, pp. 56-59.

¹³⁴ Facsimile news about that trial dated 3 February 1946 and published in *Sarajevski dnevnik*, prepared by T. Obrdalj, *Jedan život...*, p. 127.

¹³⁵ Vlado Hajnić, "Pripreme za obračun s nadbiskupom Stepincem", *PZ*, (9) 1999, no. 85, April 1999, 21-22; *Idem*, "Zatvorske uspomene (I.)", *PZ*, (9) 1999, no. 91, October 1999, 48

¹³⁶ "Fra Anzelmo Canjuga", *Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac*, 10/2003, no. 1, 34

¹³⁷ Lj.[ubica] P.[avičić], "Kako je izgledala briga komunista za djecu" *Zatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 9, 39-40.

¹³⁸ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Zadar no. K-85/47 of 26 May 1947. Cf. Bruno ZORIĆ, "Progon katoličkih svećenika", *PZ*, (12) 2002, no. 128, November 2002, 37-39. *Obituary for father E. Konatić*, with some interesting details published by Ive Livljanić and B. Zorić in *PZ*, (16) 2006, no. 172-173: 59

¹³⁹ M. Dulić, "Da se ne zaboravi"; A. Sekulić, "Dvije subotičke presude". M. Čović says that the investigation covered 200 people. (M. Čović, *Sjećanje – svjedočenje*, 44).

¹⁴⁰ Father Ratimir Kordić, *Fratar narodni neprijatelj* (Zagreb, 1995).

although such a link did not exist.¹⁴¹ I have mentioned the case of the Bishop Bonefačić of Split and the attempt to link him with the members of the Split HOP organisation.¹⁴² In the trial against two groups from Dubrovnik in 1947, there was also an attempt to present Catholic priests as the actual instigators of the illegal anti-regime activity.

According to official sources, in 1947 only seven priests were killed, but nine were assaulted and 74 were arrested; including 25 who were accused of cooperating with “Ustasha and Crusader outcasts”.¹⁴³ There was also a case in which a priest who had been stoned,¹⁴⁴ and more than ten years after the war, the Archbishop of Split, Dr. Frane Franić, was a victim of stoning and an attempted lynching.¹⁴⁵ American diplomats at the Holy See noted on 14 February 1948 that, “In Yugoslavia at the moment, at the notorious Stara Gradiška prison 104 Catholic priests in total are imprisoned. This number indicates an increase of 20 priests since two months ago. . . .”¹⁴⁶ According to the “Overview of the convicted priests, nuns and clerical officials of all religions in the territory of NRH between 1944 and 1951”, during that period some 206 Roman Catholic priests were convicted, as well as 15 Roman Catholic seminary students, 15 Roman Catholic nuns, three Greek Catholic and 13 Orthodox priests, two Orthodox nuns, one official of the Evangelic Church, two Muslim officials, seven officials of the Adventist religious community and seven officials of Jehovah’s Witnesses.¹⁴⁷ However, this is not a complete list, because it does not include the names of priests who are known to have been convicted. It is also necessary to say that the procedure in which hundreds of Catholic priests were confined in camps and prisons was more brutal than the one applied to convicted lay persons.¹⁴⁸

Very often, the judgements against priests charged with participating in subversive movements or of assisting the Crusader movement contained confessions by priests. However, they very rarely participated in Crusader

¹⁴¹ Cf. Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, p. 136.

¹⁴² M. K. Šanić, “Imala je samo 10 godina”.

¹⁴³ Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, p. 140.

¹⁴⁴ It was an attempted murder of the parish priest in Promin Mirko Validžić Čelkanović, who was stoned in Oklaj on 17 February 1946, and miraculously survived. (P. P. Cota, *Svjedočenja* (Zagreb, 1994, 134)

¹⁴⁵ Branko Madunić, “Msgr. dr. Frane Franić, nadbiskup u mirovini: Nikad nisam posumnjao u svoju svećeničku misiju”, *Nedjeljni vjesnik*, 16 February 1997, 7.

¹⁴⁶ J. Batelja, *Crna knjiga*, LXI.

¹⁴⁷ HDA, b. 310 – KOVZ, box 341.

¹⁴⁸ Camp in Viktorovac near Sisak and prison in Stara Gradiška, Cf. P. P. Cota, *Svjedočenja*, 118, 129-133. S. Radičević, a convict for a long time at Stara Gradiška and Lepoglava, also speaks about the special treatment of priests. (S. Radičević, *Robijaševi zapisi*, 64-67). The same applies to Sarajevo, Zenica and Foča, as confirmed by H. Zilić, member of organisation “Young Muslims” (Hadžibeg Zilić, «Sjećanje na zatvorske dane» *Zatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 17-18: 45-46)

activities so that such confessions should be treated with extreme caution.¹⁴⁹

One of the most spectacular trials was the one against six priests from the Franciscan Monastery of Our Lady of Lourdes in Vrbaniceva Street in Zagreb and three lay people.¹⁵⁰ They were accused of conspiracy dating from May 1946 and of links to Father Jozo Mikulić, who had allegedly returned from emigration and given them explosives to blow up the *Gaon* factory in Zavrtnica Street, near their monastery.¹⁵¹ In the course of the investigation, UDB managed to gather confessions from a number of the accused. These confessions were calculated not only to convict the accused, but also to compromise the Church in general.¹⁵² On 28 July 1947, the District Court of the City of Zagreb (K-3757/47) sentenced Vodanović, Rajić, Matošić, and Salamun to death. Soon afterward the Supreme Court of Croatia (judgement number Kž-1730/47 of 13 August 1947) confirmed the first-instance judgement, and all four were executed, while the other accused were imprisoned for long terms. After the fall of communism, it was proven that the confessions of the accused during the investigation had been false: Father Jozo Mikulić had not gone to Zagreb, so that he could not have brought them any explosives. According to the confession of one of the investigators, the entire *Gaon Operation* was an UDB set-up.¹⁵³

The Division Military Court in Banja Luka (judgement number 446/47 of 17 July 1947) convicted Janja Džaja and four other persons from Banja Luka of having belonged during the spring of 1946 to a “fascist organisation, whose aim was to overthrow or jeopardize the constitutional order in FNRJ”. The first accused was a deputy head of the Banja Luka Monastery of *Adoratrices Sanguinis Christi*,¹⁵⁴ and according to the judgment, which also convicted two other nuns, she was the one who had instigated the found-

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Z. Radelić, *Križari...*, p. 131.

¹⁵⁰ Accused were guardian and parish priest father Matej Vodanović, chapelan father Serafin Rajić, former parish priest father Albert Bukić, chapelan and catechist father Josip Visković, former guardian father Leonardo Bajić and provincial father Petar Grabić, and civilians Ivica Matošić, Ivan Salamun and Jolanda Bauer. More monks were arrested for a short time (e.g. father Ante Antić) as well as nuns.

¹⁵¹ More in: Jakša Kopic, “Kako je grupa franjevaca optužena za špijunsku djelatnost i sabotažu” *Zatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 16, August 1991, 16-17; Vesna Roller: “Nisam pristao na kompromis s komunistima (Interview: fra Josip Visković)” *Zatvorenik*, (3) 1992, no. 24-25, 7-8; father Josip VISKOVIĆ, *Sjećanja s robije* (Zagreb, 1994); fra Petar Bezina, *Franjevci...*; fra Stjepan Čovo, *Fra Leonard Bajić. Mučenik za vjeru i domovinu* (Split, 2003). Father Ante Čavka wrote a novel about that case: *Operacija Gaon* (Primorski Dolac, 2006), which contains some parts of the trial file.

¹⁵² This, undoubtedly, was the reason to include, for instance, investigation records which contain confession of Franciscan provincial father Petar Grabić, into the case against of Archbishop Stepinac (HDA, File of the Supreme Court of NRH, 6/46 – Trial against Lisak, Stepinac and others).

¹⁵³ P. Bezina, *Franjevci...*, pp. 255-276.

¹⁵⁴ The original says that the first accused was a “nun at the monastery of *Adoratrices Sanguinis Christi*”.

ing of the organisation whose members had become her associates, Sisters Slavka Matijanić and Inviolata Anić, the head of the Monastery. They were accused of having gathered and copied leaflets with “subversive contents”, of having assisted Crusaders in the woods in various ways, and even of having gathered weapons and ammunition. Most of the illegal meetings, the indictment said, had been held at the Monastery. According to handwritten comments on one copy of the judgement, which is available in the AHDPZ, and undoubtedly originated from one of the convicted nuns, none of the incriminations was correct, except for their having received “10 copies of leaflets about the elections”. Those handwritten comments imply that the accused were instigated to do so by a woman named Zdenka, who is mentioned in the judgement as a “former Ustasha official.” Although Zdenka’s last name is not stated anywhere, it appears that she was an agent provocateur of the Yugoslav intelligence service.¹⁵⁵

On 7 December 1947, Father Julijan Ramljak, Joso Šarić, Filip Grabovac, Dragutin Božić, Križan Gotovac, Dujo Šarić and Božo Skejo were tried in the District Court of Šibenik. The trial was over in a single day, and the accused were convicted of having assisted the Crusaders and undermined the Communist system. While serving his eight-year prison sentence, Father J. Ramljak was charged again, and on 17 August 1948 he was sentenced to a single-term imprisonment of 18 years for having organised an armed attack on the gunpowder warehouse in Siverić in January 1947 (among other charges). None of the charges were true: there had been no subversive organisation, neither had the accused taken any subversive actions. Their only crime had been to offer a passive resistance to the Yugoslav Communist regime.¹⁵⁶

Nonetheless, there were cases where priests and seminary students had been active in the illegal resistance to the regime. In mid September 1950, UDB arrested forty seminary students and several lay persons from Zagreb who had been connected with the seminary students. The investigation lasted until 17 May of the following year, when the Public Prosecutor’s Office for the City of Zagreb filed an indictment (number B-283/1951) against fourteen seminary students (Stjepan Novak, Vladimir Šubat, Mate Selak, Gabrijel Sakač, Stjepan Plantak, Silvije Brezovnjački, Antun Grivec, August Korpar, August Horvat, Marijan Grgić, Gustav Kuzmić, Milan Balenović, Franjo Muren, Ignatije Hrastić) and two priests (Josip Salač and Franjo Talan). They were accused of founding a secret organisation called Croatian National Resistance (HNO) in February 1950 with the aim of undermining the state and the social order through propaganda. The organisation had a book of rules, and its members were taking an oath. As a part of its activities, the organisation prepared, produced and distributed a number of leaflets with hostile content; they sent a number of life-threatening let-

¹⁵⁵ AHDPZ, Division Military Court in Banja Luka, judgement no. 446/47 of 17 July 1947. The handwritten notes on a copy of the judgement at AHDPZ say that “some Zdenka” is identified as Mira Krajić, an OZN collaborator.

¹⁵⁶ More in father J. Ramljak, *Nečastiva urota*, title; *Idem*, *Nečastiva urota II.*, title

ters to representatives of local authorities. The Supreme Commander of the Croatian National Resistance (HNO) was considered to be the signatory of those letters that were copied in some hundred copies and sent to numerous addressees. Members of HNO also exchanged dissident literature and wrote patriotic (“Ustasha”) poems (including those glorifying NDH and Ante Pavelić), which they recited on various occasions. They also celebrated the anniversary of the proclamation of NDH and displayed Pavelić’s picture in a classroom while doing so.¹⁵⁷ Brought before the District Court in Zagreb, they were found guilty on 16 June 1951 and sentenced to long prison terms—a total of 92 years—with forced labour.¹⁵⁸ Most of the incriminations matched the facts, as confirmed by one of the accused in the proceedings, who says that all of the accused were “seminary students, who had stayed in the seminary for eight years, with two, three or four years of theology. This means that we were not just ambitious young men, but also mature people with a clear idea that we should fight against the regime, which was using all means to destroy anything Croatian, and the Catholic Church was attacked most, its leaders, its youth, and even all people who considered themselves believers”.¹⁵⁹

The regime’s response was to increase its repression of the Church; the following year, a number of trials were staged with the purpose of hindering the work of the Catholic Church by trying priests, incarcerating seminary students, and so on. A unique form of pressure was the effort to get priests to subscribe to the so-called class associations, which were meant to convince clergy to collaborate with the regime. In the attempt to talk imprisoned priests into joining the Class Priest Association, a letter was delivered to the prisoners at Stara Gradiška prison in August 1952, in which the Association bragged about its efforts to improve the situation of incarcerated priests who had “shown with their work and efforts that they have corrected themselves”. Few priests replied to the letter, even though those who did so were amnestied on 29 November 1953. But the majority remained obedient to their superiors, who had strongly condemned the founding of the Association.¹⁶⁰ The regime in BiH used the identical means, promising a more lenient treatment and amnesty to the imprisoned priests if they join the Association of Catholic Priests for BiH “Good Shepherd”.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ AHDPZ, Indictment of the Public Prosecutor’s Office for the City of Zagreb no. B-283/1951 of 17 May 1951

¹⁵⁸ AHDPZ, Judgement of the District Court in Zagreb K-209/51-8 of 16 June 1951.

¹⁵⁹ S. Plantak, «Proces protiv zagrebačkih bogoslova», (VI.). Plantak’s memoirs with crucial documents were published in *PZ* in five parts, no.s 143-147.

¹⁶⁰ S. Radičević, *Robijaševi zapisi*, 66-67.

¹⁶¹ Father Tvrtko Ban, “Kolaboracionisti komunisti” *Zatvorenik*, (2) 1991, no. 9: 46-47. However, the regime was more successful in BiH. The same author says that in 1990, just before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, 95 percent of Bosnian Franciscans were members “all the young ones and most of the olders”. The reasons of different consequences of founding of class associations in Croatia and BiH are numerous and complex, but they are outside the scope of this discussion. See: J. Krišto, “Korisne budale, svjesni suradnici ili mudri manip-

Conclusion

The establishment of the communist Yugoslavia was followed by violence, mass murder, the suppression of normal political freedoms, the imprisonment of political opponents, and widespread hunger among the general population. Consequently, the regime faced from the very beginning a passive resistance to its attempts to reshape society on the Bolshevik model. Besides passive resistance, during the entire time of the existence of the communist Yugoslavia, from its birth to its last breath, authorities faced a political, and sometimes armed, resistance by a large number of individuals and groups in Croatia and BiH. There has been no research so far that could give a reliable answer to the question of whether there were significant differences in the attitude of members of various nations towards that ideology. Still, even the incomplete statistical data on those executed after the Second World War and on political prisoners imply with great probability that Croat Catholics were the least prone to make concessions to the communist ideology and regime.

Croats were among those who continued the armed struggle against communist Yugoslavia after the fall of NDH. The key role in that struggle was played by Crusader groups, which continued offering armed resistance, while waiting for a conflict between the democratic and communist countries, which they considered imminent, in which Croatia, owing to its traditionally European orientation, and with the help of the Croatian political emigration, would be liberated and re-established as a state. Although it took several years for the Yugoslav regime to break it, and more than ten years to destroy it completely, the Crusader movement was destined to failure because the mass slaughters at the end of the war and the brutal regime's repression hindered their military and political victory in the country, while the international situation – as in earlier periods – was entirely unfavourable for the establishment of an independent Croatia.

At the same time, when the Crusader movement began in the spring of 1945, dozens of illegal groups of Croatian farmers, workers, clerks, high-school and university students were established all over Croatia, which in different ways demonstrated their resistance to Communism and the idea of a Yugoslav state. Similarly to the treatment of the Crusader movement, the Yugoslav authorities occasionally invented such groups in order to achieve various aims. By doing that, they eliminated potentially dangerous individuals. On the other hand, they justified the introduction of a more repressive regime every time and gained means to achieve benefits in foreign policy, such as levelling the relations with the East and the West, and the conflict

ulatori? Udruženje katoličkih svećenika BiH "Dobri pastir", *Fra Ferdo Vlašić, vizionar i patnik. Spomenica*, ed. father Robert Jolić, father Gabrijel Mioč and Marija Vukadin (Tomislavgrad, 2005), pp. 81-101. The article was published in *Katolički tjednik* from Sarajevo, no. 21-25, 28 May – 25 June 2006. See also the polemics which followed in the same weekly between the author and several Bosnian Franciscans.

with the Holy See, as the Catholic Church proved to be a sole serious and organised opponent to the communist regime on the long run.

All those forms of resistance did not suffice to dissemble the communist regime and Yugoslavia. Still, their systematicness and long life undoubtedly show that the struggle for the achievement of those aims never ceased.

Organisierter Widerstand gegen das jugoslawische kommunistische Regime in Kroatien 1945-1953

Zusammenfassung

In dieser Arbeit wird aufgrund des zugänglichen Archivstoffes und der veröffentlichten Literatur der kroatische Widerstand dem kroatischen Staat und dem kommunistischen Regime in den ersten Nachkriegsjahren analysiert. Obwohl der Zeitraum zwischen 1945 i 1966 für die Zeit außerordentlich heftiger Konflikte mit der untauglichen Bevölkerungsschicht und gesellschaftlichen Gruppen gehalten werden kann, verdient eine besondere Analyse die Periode von 1945 bis 1952/53. Diese Zeit charakterisierte der Zusammenbruch des Unabhängigen Kroatischen Staates, weiterhin der Sieg der Partisanenbewegung, angeführt mit der Kommunistischen Partei Jugoslawiens, internationale Anerkennung des neuen Regimes und der Unterdrückung irgendeiner Oppositionsform. Gleichzeitig leistete in Kroatien und Bosnien und Herzegowina an die Tausenden von Individuen Widerstand gegenüber dem kommunistischen Jugoslawien. Es wurden mehrere Gruppen organisiert, die zweifellos ein höheres Niveau des politischen Widerstands für neues Regime darstellten. Das war auch die Zeit des Konflikts zwischen Tito und Stalin sowie der eifrigen Anstrengungen des jugoslawischen Regimes, mit dem Ziel die Komintern von der Richtigkeit seiner kommunistischen Ziele zu überzeugen. Auf dem Höhepunkt des Kalten Krieges brach der Krieg in Korea aus, und die Krise um Trieste eskalierte, was wesentlich die Ereignisse im kommunistischen Jugoslawien prägte. Der Höhepunkt der Verfolgung der Katholischen Kirche und die Unterbrechung diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Jugoslawien und Vatikan sowie der Tod von Stalin 1953, waren das wesentlichste Merkmal dieses Zeitraums.