

# The Yugoslav National Army Role in the Aggression Against the Republic of Croatia from 1990 to 1992

**Davor Marijan**

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The essay analyses the role of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) in the war waged against Croatia from 1990 to 1992. The author draws attention to the fact that from the end of the 1980s, the JNA was an active party to the Serbian expansionist aspirations that gripped Yugoslavia after Titos death. The Armys role is chronicled from the point of Croatias democratisation in 1990 to its retreat in the spring of 1992, after having only partially executed the tasks that Serbian expansionist policy had delegated.

Following the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) entered the crisis-ridden 1980s. This decade was marked by incidents in Kosovo in 1981 and 1989, chronic economic crisis, and a rise in Serbian expansionist nationalism directed towards the federal state, which had been defined and formally adopted with the enactment of the 1974 Constitution. The Yugoslav National Armys involvement served to show that Serbian expansionist ideas had deeply affected even that institution, in which Serbs dominated<sup>1</sup>, and which had

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\*All afore-mentioned documents, unless otherwise specified, can be found in the possession of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia.

1. An omni-present characteristic of the Yugoslav National Army during the entire course of its existence is the uneven structure of national representation in its commissioned officers corps, particularly among generals and higher ranking officer personnel. Prior to the war, Croatians in percentages comprised 12.6% of the Army population, which when compared with their representation in SFRYs population

for years represented itself as the prime defender of Titos legacy<sup>2</sup>. The JNA, which was publicly touted as a microcosm of Yugoslavia, evolved into a small-scale Serbia by the beginning of the 1990s. The Army, which had been an imposing political factor and the defender of the socialist state<sup>3</sup>, was unable to remain a peaceful bystander during the political changes that occurred in SFRY.<sup>4</sup>

The JNA, along with the Territorial Defence (here-after referred to as the TD), constituted SFRYs integrated Armed Forces<sup>5</sup>. The JNA was the operationally ready, well-armed federal component, while the TD was the inferiorly armed and relative-

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represented a £63 deficit, Slovenes comprised 2.8% representing a £66 deficit, Muslims 2.4% representing a £78 deficit, while Albanians comprised 0.6% representing a £66 deficit. On the other hand, a 63.2% Serbian representation in the officer population represented a +51 surplus, Montenegrins comprised 6.2% representing a +148 surplus, while Yugoslavs comprised 3.6% representing a +45 surplus. Davor DOMAZET, *How Aggression Against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina Was Prepared or the Transformation of the JNA into a Serbian Imperial Force*, *Croatian International Relations Review*, Vol. V, No. 14-1999, pages 2-3.; Teodor GERŠEK, *Who Controls the Yugoslav Army*, *Revija Obramba* (Ljubljana), No 4-1991, 56 to 61.

2. Veljko KADIJEVIC, *My Perspective of the Break-up*, Belgrade 1993, 5, claims that SFRYs 1974 Constitution marked the beginning of the transformation of the JNA into an army without a state.
3. The 944th Rear-echelon Base Command, Classified No 159-65, 7th of December, 1989, to the 2nd Technical Warehouse Command, Transcript of Titos Authentic Views on the status and role of the JNA and the armed forces in our system.
4. The JA (Yugoslav Army). As of 1951 the JNA was afforded an exceptional status and its origins can be drawn from World War II. The Army commander, Josip Broz Tito, was also the first politician and party leader. Following the war, The JNAs exclusiveness, initially originating on account of special relations with the Leader, was continuously supplemented with the appropriation of new exclusive privileges. This revolutionary pedigree was further afforded the role of a defender of socialist ideological purity and its resulting achievements. In time, the monopoly of the countrys defence capacities against outside aggression was broadened and redirected so as to include the internal protection of party (ideological) values and objectives as they relate to order in society . Miroslav HADŽIC, *The Armys Use of Trauma, The Serbian Perspective of War, Trauma and Catharsis through Historical Recollection*, prepared by Nebojša Popov, Beograd 1996, 562.  
Miroslav HADŽIC, *The Armys Use of Trauma, The Serbian Side of the War, Trauma and catharsis in historical memory*, Nebojša Popov, Belgrade 1996, 562.
5. The JNA was a united military powerÉ of all peoples and nationalities and the strength of the united military forces while the Territorial Defence (TD) was the most generalÉ .form of organizing working class people and citizens for combat and execution of specific tasks for public defence, and the most general form of organization for general armed resistance. *The Strategy of General Defence and Public Self-Defence of the SFRY, The Federal Secretariat for the Peoples Defence (SSNO)*, Belgrade, 1987., pp.54-56.

ly less mobile component at the republic level, and was envisaged as an all-pervasive support mechanism for the JNA<sup>6</sup>. In terms of their interrelationship, the JNA and the TD were completely equal, and in wartime, these two components were intended to complement one another through a nation-wide armed resistance concept. As with the JNA, where the competent authority for its deployment was the SFRY Presidency, the same was the case with the Territorial Defence, which in peace-time was under the jurisdiction of Republic level and regional authorities. After Titos death, these republic and provincial authorities reinforced their political influence<sup>7</sup>. Equality between the two components which comprised the armed forces was legally affirmed in the provisions of the 1974 Constitution. This is one of the measures that prevented the centralisation of Yugoslavia and thereby thwarted the most populous nation from dominating the others through any of the federal institutions.

During the mid-eighties, a reorganisation of the JNA was carried out under the Unity Plan. In terms of the military ground forces, the former armies (six in total and one independent corps) were abolished. With the exception of Croatia and Serbia, the army zones, which were roughly identical to the jurisdictional areas of the republics, were abolished and replaced with corps structured military districts<sup>8</sup>. Prior to the transition to that plan, a long period was required for the military elite to convince the various federal institutions that the formation of military corps district commands would not deprive the republics and provinces of their rights and obligations, but rather would enable the JNA to centralise its operations both in wartime and in peace. The proposal was adopted despite the fact that the question of republic and provincial subordination was again raised. At the beginning of 1998, the political leadership of Slovenia requested that this decision be revised, as they had realised just in time that the JNA, despite statements to the contrary, was heading toward unitarianism. On the basis of a ruling by the SFRY Presidency, republic and provincial TD commands were rendered subordinate to the military corps district commands in wartime; likewise, TD units were rendered subordinate to corps commands. The position of the JNA representative was that in this manner duplication of strategic, operational and tactical commands was avoided.<sup>9</sup>

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6 The Strategy of Armed Combat, SSNO, Belgrade 1983., pp. 69, 109-110.

7 Branko MAMULA, The Yugoslavia Case, Podgorica 2000., pp.49, 55.

8 Along with three infantry commands of military districts, there was an Air Force, Anti-aircraft and Naval Command at the same rank.

9 The Federal Secretariat for the peoples defence I, Development of the armed forces of SFRY 1945-1985, book 7/1, Belgrade 1990, pp. 375-6; Branko MAMULA, The Case of Yugoslavia, pp.59-68.

In Zagreb on the 25th of December, 1988, the command of the 5th peacetime military district, also known as the Command of the wartime Northwest military district, became operational.<sup>10</sup> According to the new division, the Northwest military district came about by merging the 5th and 9th armies and encompassed Slovenia, northwest Croatia, parts of Istria with Gorski Kotar, Lika, Kordun and Banovina. In 1988 four corpuses were formed in that region. Two were in Slovenia, the 14th in Ljubljana, and the 31st in Maribor. The northern part of Istria and the Croatian coastal region were assigned to the 13th corpus in Rijeka. Northwest Croatia was the region of the 32nd Corpus in Varaždin.<sup>11</sup> The larger part of Kordun was the region of the 6th proletarian infantry division in Karlovac, while Zagreb and the surrounding area had a separate Defence Command of the city of Zagreb.<sup>12</sup> Air support to the 5th military district was given by the 5th corpus of the air force and anti-aircraft divisions located in Zagreb.<sup>13</sup> The remaining, larger part of Croatian territory was divided between the 1st military district and the naval district. The 1st military district was located in Belgrade and encompassed Slavonia and 17 corpuses in Tuzla. The naval district was in Split and generally maintained its existing organisation: a fleet and three naval sectors with a newly formed 9th corpus. The naval district was responsible for the Adriatic coast and part of northern Dalmatia. Northern Dalmatia encompassed the zone of the 9th corpus in Knin, the 5th naval sector in Pula was responsible for the northern part of the Adriatic coast, the 8th sector in Šibenik for the middle, and the 9th in Kuboru in Boka Kotorska for the southern part of the Adriatic coast.<sup>14</sup>

The victory of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) at the first free and democratic elections in April 1990 in Croatia was a

10. SSNO, Joint Chiefs JNA, 1st Directorate, DT. No. 374-184/87, 10.XI.1998., Command of the 5th army, Orders.;
11. Command of the 5th army, DT No. 7-1, 23.I.1989. Report on combat readiness for 1998.
12. Overview of the zones of responsibility, working map of the Command 5th Military District. The map was made according to the orders of the Command of the 5th M.D., DT. No. 24-1 of the 13.XII.1988.
13. SSNO, Joint Chiefs of the JNA, I. Directorate, DT. No.68-I, 16.XII.1986., Command of the 5th army, Orders; SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, I Directorate, SP. No. 532-1, 14.III.1989., Command of the 5th Military District, Improvement and development of administration and command of the armed forces.
14. The Navy, Development of the Armed Forces SFRY 1945-1985, Belgrade, 1988, Gojko UZELAC The problems of armed combat on JPV and long-term equipping of troops KoV JNA in M.D. with funds of the NVO. JNA, 1987., 263.; SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, 1st Directorate, SP. No. 532-1, 14.III.1989., Command of the 5th M.D., Improvement and development of administration and command of the armed forces.

signal for the armed forces to interfere with Croatia's road toward sovereignty. A few days prior to HDZ's assumption of power in Croatia, the JNA (May 23rd, 1990) confiscated the weapons of the territorial defence of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and put them in storage in its warehouses.<sup>15</sup> This was done on orders of the Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff - Armed Forces of the SFRY on May 14th, 1990 due to the secure placement and protection of arms and ammunition of the territorial defence.<sup>16</sup> The confiscation of weapons violated the official concept of people's defence, in respect to the TD as an equal component of the armed forces, and was carried out without the confirmation of the Presidency of SFRY.<sup>17</sup> Army General Kadijevic justified the actions by arguing that the weapons were exclusively under the jurisdiction of the army, and not the republics which had no right to them. He consoled them by stating that the weapons could be returned once the republics could guarantee good defence conditions.<sup>18</sup>

Confiscation of the TD weaponry resulted in organisational and formational changes in the 1st and 5th military districts (m.d.) as well as the naval districts. The 1st m.d., 10th motorized brigade in Mostar was reclassified from B to A, the crucial factor being the incorporation of an armoured and mechanised battalion into its system per A classification.<sup>19</sup> In Banja Luka the 329th armoured brigade was also transformed from B to A classification and located in part in Derventa. The Knin corpus, in which the 221st motorized brigade was partially transformed into A classification, also incorporated an armoured and mechanised battalion. The armoured battalion was located in Benkovac, and the mechanised battalion in Knin. As in the case of the 10th motorized brigade, this was an unusual formational change for this type of brigade.<sup>20</sup>

The most significant changes, however, took place in the 5th military district. The 6th proletarian infantry division, as well as the defence command of the city of Zagreb, were eliminated. The

15. Chronology of the War, The Aggression on Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina, The Croatian Information Centre, Zagreb, 1998., p.23.

16. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, p. No. 19-1, 14.V.1990., Command of the 5th M.D., Orders.

17. The President of the Presidency of the SFRY, Borisav Jovic, noted in his diaries We quite practically disarmed them. Formally the Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did this but in fact according to our orders. The Slovenes and Croats reacted harshly to no avail. We shall not permit the misuse of the weaponry of the Territorial Defence for eventual conflicts or forceful separation. Borisav JOVIC, The Last Days of the SFRY, Belgrade 1996., p.146.

18. Borisav JOVIC, The Last Days of the SFRY, Belgrade 1996., pp. 146-7.

19. According to wartime formation, A formations had 60-100% troop capacity, B type had 15-60% and R type had up to 15% troop capacity.

20. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, 1st Directorate, No.1487-171/89,15.V.1990. Command of the 5th M.D., Order.

region surrounding Zagreb as well as Kordun and Banovina were incorporated into the new formation of the 10th corps. The formation of the 10th corps, located in Zagreb, was placed outside regular activity in the organisational and formational changes according to the Unity 2 and 3 plan. The newly formed corps was enhanced by the 32nd corps, 140th motorized brigade B, and the 31st mechanised brigade R; from this amalgamation the 140th mechanical brigade of A classification was formed. The 4th armoured brigades located in Jastrebarsko and Karlovac were reclassified from B to A and were placed under the command of the 10th corps. The formation of the 10th corps separated the JNA from the territorial defence of the city of Zagreb. The 32nd corps, 265th mechanised brigade from Bjelovar and Koprivnica, was also transformed from B to A as well as the 13th corps, 13th proletarian motorized brigade located in Ilirska Bistrica and Rijeka. Changes also occurred in Slovenia where the 14th corps, 1st armoured brigade in Vrhniki was also reclassified from B to A. These formational changes directly resulted in strengthening the formations offensive strength and firepower while increasing its mobility outside of transport routes. Formations directly under the command of the 5th military district, the 580th mixed artillery brigade in Karlovac, and the 288th combined anti-armour artillery brigade in Virovitica and Križevci were also reclassified from B to A.<sup>21</sup> Further developments showed that most of these formations, until the outbreak of the conflict in the summer of 1991, were used to form what the JNA promoted as a buffer zone, while they were in fact interfering in the work of the legal bodies of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia.

In reclassifying formations of the 5th military district into A class, the military command was attempting to avoid having to rely on manpower in units where Croats were in the majority, and instead brought in new recruits from other parts of Yugoslavia. Insisting on armoured and mechanised formations was logical as they were equipped with complex combat technology, which is most effective. Reliance on such formations was based on the success they had displayed in Kosovo in the 1980s.<sup>22</sup>

The revolt of Croatian Serbs in the summer of 1990 marked the beginning of the crisis in the Republic of Croatia. The police

21. SSNO JCS AF SFRY, 1st Directorate, No. 1487-171/89, 15.V.1990., Command of the 5th M.D., Order; Command of the 5th M.D., DT No. 2-14, 24.I.1991., Report of the realisation of assignments from the plan Unity 2 and 3, in 1990.

22. The reason for the changes was mentioned in the memoirs of the President of the Presidency of SFRY at the time Borisav Jovic when he noted that on the 8th of June, 1990 the Minister of Defence Veljko Kadijevic said we decided to form special motorized corpuses in the regions of Zagreb, Knin, Banja Luka, and Herzegovina which will be prepared, when necessary, to function as in Kosovo. B. JOVIC, *The Last Days of the SFRY*, p.152.

station in Knin rejected (July 3rd, 1990) the authority of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia.<sup>23</sup> In the Knin region (August 17th) armed Serb civilians blocked transport routes. Attempts by Special Forces of the Croatian Interior Ministry to quell the revolt at its inception were blocked by the JNA, which openly supported the armed Serb civilians from the moment they took to the streets. The Federal Secretariat of the Peoples Defence of SFRY justified air force intervention by citing the unannounced flight of Croatian helicopters lacking airspace confirmation.<sup>24</sup> This violation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia had the popular support of Serbs in Bosnian Krajina and Serbia proper at various rallies urging an armed uprising.<sup>25</sup> Immediately thereafter, on August 18th, 1990, rebel Serbs attacked police stations in Donji Lapac, Titova Korenica, Gračac, Obrovac, and Benkovac. Next an attempt was made to create disturbances and destabilise the constitutionally defined order in the region of Petrinja Đa mixed ethnic region where Croats comprised the majority. The disturbances, however, occurred in the periphery where Serbs were in the majority. During the attacks on the police stations in Petrinja, Glina, Dvor na Uni, and Obrovac in northern Dalmatia, local Serbs confiscated 200 rifles and compact rifles, 150 handguns, 23 machine guns, and approximately 110,000 pieces of ammunition.<sup>26</sup> The convenient repositioning of the 9th corps in the Knin region allowed the rebel Serbs to quietly organise their armed forces and broaden the uprising to other parts of the Republic of Croatia. Due to the unequal distribution of power, the Croatian leadership did not even consider a direct confrontation with the JNA; the weapons at the Croat` s disposal were useless against a well-armed federal army. Achieving calm and order in parts of the country had to be achieved indirectly. The unarmed government of the Republic of Croatia had to take possession of the weapons in order to quash the rebellion, which was a danger politically and economically to the young Croatian state.

In addition to the formation of the generals` party, the Communist Union-the Movement for Yugoslavia, two other events are worth mentioning in regard to the federal armed forces actions. The first was the renowned statement by the federal

23. Day of Security, Krajina Army (Knin), journal of the Serb Krajina Army, July 1995, p.18.

24. The army has a mission to stop a fratricidal war Peoples Army (Belgrade),23.VIII.1990,p.5; Two years later the government of the rebel Serbs made a decision which ConfirmsÉ that the war on the territory of the Serb Republic of Krajina began on the 17th of August, 1990. Serb Republic of Krajina, Government, No.04-3-270/92, 28.VII.1992., Decision.

25. B. JOVIC, The Last days of the SFRY, pp.178-9.

26. The army embraced the people, Stolen weapons, Peoples Army, 11.X.1990., pp.4-5,15.

defence secretary Kadijevic in an interview for the Zagreb weekly *Danas*: The territorial defence, as formed at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, is objectively a deliberate act of deceit which, after the collapse of the political concept on which it was founded, proved to serve as the foundation for the republic armies.<sup>27</sup> Kadijevic's interview was a clear message and threat to Croatia and Slovenia, republics which offered a confederative model for the peaceful redefinition and redesign of Yugoslavia. It was also a direct attack on Tito's legacy, which the JNA publicly pretended to uphold. The second event was the formation of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, a body that is active only in time of war.<sup>28</sup>

Once the federal ministry of defence reported to the Presidency of the SFRY on December 11th, 1990, that armed paramilitary units were being unofficially formed,<sup>29</sup> the Presidency decided to disband armed paramilitary units (January 9th).<sup>30</sup> This decision illustrated the insurmountable differences that existed. The Croatian government considered the paramilitary units to be in Krajina, while the JNA considered the legally organised units of the Croatian Interior Ministry to be the actual paramilitary units. After an unsuccessful attempt to disarm the republic, the JNA launched an intensive media campaign against Croatia at the end of January 1991. Several Croatian citizens were arrested, and the military court in Zagreb attempted to court-marshal the Croatian Minister of Defence, Martin Špegelj. The military journal, *The Peoples Army*, released two issues titled *The truth about the arming of the HDZ's terrorist formations in Croatia*, dedicated solely to this issue, which they distorted. Meanwhile they ignored completely the intensive arming of the rebel Serbs.<sup>31</sup> And led by members of the Serbian Democratic Party, they continued to form their armed forces in which they engaged retired officers, including security forces of the JNA.<sup>32</sup>

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27. We must disarm all armed formations created outside of the united and constitutionally (SFRY) defined armed forces, *Peoples Army*, 6.XII.1990., 5.-9, Interview from *Danas*.

28. Antun TUS, *The war in Slovenia and Croatia until the Sarajevo armistice, The War in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina 1991-1995*, Zagreb-Sarajevo, 1999., p.68; SSNO JCS AF SFRY, 1st Directorate, No. 532-1, 14.III.1989., *Improvement and Development of Administration and Command in the armed forces; The Strategy of the peoples defence and public self-defence of SFRY*, p.82.

29. V.KADIJEVIC, *My view of the break-up*, p.111.

30. Presidency of the SFRY, No. 3, 9.I.1991., Order.

31. *The truth about the arming of the HDZ's terrorist formations in Croatia*, *The Peoples Army*, special edition, 26.I.1991.; *The truth about the arming of the HDZ's terrorist formations in Croatia (2)*, *The Peoples Army*, 28.II.1991.

The situation in Croatia intensified on March 1st, 1991, when rebel Serbs attacked the police station in Pakrac and disarmed the policemen of Croatian nationality. The next day, due to the intervention of special units of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Croatia, the rebellion was quashed. Without assembling the Presidency of the SFRY, the president of the Presidency, Borisav Jovic, ordered the JNA to intervene. Units from Bjelovar, Virovitica, and Zagreb were sent to Pakrac, while the command of the 32nd Corps relocated its HQ there.<sup>33</sup> The military journal *The Peoples Army* mentioned in a report done a few days later the take-over of police stations and new police administration, which clearly indicates their solidarity with these acts and legitimises the rebellion of the Serb minority in Croatia. Headquarters commander of the 5th military district, General Dobrašin Prašćević, stated in Pakrac that they had come to prevent an ethnic conflict, to show and convince the people that they will not be left at the mercy of special units (of the Interior Ministry), and to allow them (the special units) to witness our readiness to prevent savagery and bloodshed.<sup>34</sup>

The events in Pakrac triggered a request by the Headquarters of the Supreme Command for a declaration of martial law in the country and a suspension of all normative acts in contradiction to the constitution of SFRY and federal law (Presidency meeting of SFRY held on the 12th to the 15th of March 1991). The Presidency of SFRY rejected this request in a 4-4 vote. Montenegro, Serbia and the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo voted in favor of the proposal.<sup>35</sup> The military elite, acting as the extended arm of Serbia, believed that the source of the problem was the multiparty system in which non-Communist parties triumphed in Croatia and Slovenia, and that the only solution was a return to the old system.<sup>36</sup> This was one more instance in which the JNA distanced itself from its constitutional obliga-

32. Command 5th Corps RV and PVO, Security Dept., SP.No.40-541, 10.XII.1990, Security Sector KRV and PVO, Notes on the situation in Zadar and Knin; Command 5th Corps RV and PVO, Security Dept., SP.No. 20-376 of 27.III.1991., Security Sector KRV and PVO, OA Defence, Notes on the activities of the SDS in Zemunik.

33. The people protected from aggression, *The Peoples Army*, 7.III.1991., p.4; B. JOVIC, *The last days of the SFRY*, pp.281-2.

34. The people defended from aggression, *The Peoples Army*, 7.III.1991.,p.4; The manner in which the JNA acted in Pakrac was the formula used for their actions in the next few months and became their standard procedure. In their media and public appearances they tagged this procedure the creation of a tampon zone which did not allow for the functioning of the Croatian Interior Ministry. These zones were nothing but an attempt to maintain the status quo.

35. V. KADIJEVIC, *My view of the break-up*, p.113; B. JOVIC, *The Last days of SFRY*, pp.286-95.

tions, and one step closer to its transformation into the armed forces of the Serbian nation, within and beyond Serbia proper. This position led soon after to JNA engagement in the arming and training of rebel Serbs in Croatia.<sup>37</sup> The deputy security chief of the commander of the 10th corps organised between April-July, 1990, the withdrawal of large amounts of weaponry and ammunition from the military warehouses in Lika for use by the Serbian Democratic Party.<sup>38</sup>

The following major incident occurred at the end of March, when Serb paramilitary units barricaded the area of Plitvice on the road from Slunj to Titova Korenica. Special units of the Croatian police successfully intervened and prevented the arrival of armoured units of the JNA from the 1st and 5th military districts, which were intending to create a buffer zone between the opposing parties.<sup>39</sup> The Radan plan for extraordinary circumstances clearly indicates that the true purpose for creating a buffer zone was to prevent the consolidation of an elected government and constitutional order in the Republic of Croatia. At the beginning of April, the 9th corps of the JNA received orders to act in cooperation with the 8th naval sector and the 5th military district for the purpose of preventing the passing of units of the Interior Ministry through routes in the greater area of Zadar, Biograd, Šibenik, Split, and Sinj which lead to Knin, Benkovac, and Obrovac. The directions of the 5th military district were to defend controlled areas and control routes which lead through the Lika hills to the areas of Gračac, Obrovac, and Knin.<sup>40</sup> Having in mind that the units of the 5th district created a buffer zone in the Plitvice area, the entire Knin and Lika regions having majority Serb populations were given a guard, which prevented any actions by the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Croatia, and allowed for the further development and organisation of the illegal rebel Serb government.

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36. At that meeting (of the Presidency) where the Serbian expansionist option did not legally secure control of the country, the JNA leaned toward the option that according to General Kadijevic meant the protection and defence of the Serbian people outside of Serbia proper and the assembling of the JNA within the borders of the future Yugoslavia. V. KADIJEVIC, *My view on the break-up*, pp.113-14.

37. Command 18th Corps, No. 7-397/8, 26.VIII.1994. JCS ASK, Request for extraordinary promotion of Vujic Matije Marka.

38. The Serb Army of Krajina, Command, Security Sector, S.P. No. 321-99, 16.X.1994., Command of the Serbian Republic, Request.

39. The army reinstates peace, *The Peoples Army*, 4.IV.1991., pp.4-5; The road to war paved with victory, *Serbian Army*, (Sarajevo), journal of the Army of the Serbian Republic, 9.V.1994., p.14.

40. Command 9th Corps, DT Đ 1-4, 05.IV.1991., Command 9th bVP, Defence orders Op. No. 1.

After this, the JNA became actively engaged. At the beginning of April 1991, during a meeting of the Secretariat for the Peoples Defence, it was decided to move some units westward. Part of the elite 63rd airborne brigade was sent from Niš to Zagreb. From the 51st mechanised brigade in Pančevo, the 1st armoured battalion was transferred to Petrinja in Banovina and incorporated into the 622nd motorized brigade.<sup>41</sup> The second mechanised battalion of the 36th mechanised brigade from Subotica and the 1st mechanised battalion of the 453rd mechanised brigade from Sremska Mitrovica were transferred to eastern Slavonia and Vinkovci and placed under the command of the 17th corps.<sup>42</sup> The armoured and mechanised components of the 10th motorized brigade from Mostar were transferred to the Kupres highlands in May.<sup>43</sup> By acting in this timely manner, they managed to withdraw from areas with Croat majorities towards areas that were more ethnically accommodating; they moved to northern Dalmatia in September and were incorporated into the 9th corps. The activities of the JNA in eastern Slavonia were accelerated in June with the engagement of the Naval River Surveillance flotilla, whose units were used to supervise bridges and crossings on the Danube River from Bezdán to Ilok, and to serve as artillery support to infantry in the region.<sup>44</sup>

In May 1991 activities dramatically increased. In Borovo Selo, twelve Croat policemen were slaughtered at the hands of the paramilitary četniks. This incident proved to be the beginning of the armed uprising in the Vukovar municipality.<sup>45</sup> The rebellion spread around Vinkovci and Osijek, and the villages of Mirkovci and Tenja were incorporated into the JNA buffer zone and became četnik strongholds. In reaction to the increased tension in the country, the Headquarters of the Supreme Command ordered on May 6th increased JNA combat readiness and mobilisation of relevant units so that the JNA, in the event that federal and republic bodies could not secure peace, can do so effectively and according to its constitutionally defined role and responsi-

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41. Command 5th M.D., 12.V.1991., Report from review and control of 622nd mtr and 4th arbr.; A. TUS. The war in Slovenia and Croatia until the Sarajevo armistice, The War in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina 1991-1995., pp.68-9.

42. The Croatian Information Centre (HIC), Command 17th corps, DT. No.11/1-93, 14.V.1991., Order.

43. Personnel and techniques which rise to all challenges, The Peoples Army, 23.V.1991. pp. 15-16.

44. Another song can be heard, The Peoples Army, 7.VIII.1991., p.11.

45. Command 5th Corps RV and PVO, Security Forces, SP. No. 6-369 of 14.V.1991., Security Dept. KRV and PVO., Notes on the situation in Vukovar.; Command 5th Corps RV and PVO, Security Forces, SP. No. 20-524 of 24.V.1991., Statement of Sergeant Srđan Mitrovic from MP 7660/7 Lučko of 18.V.1991.

bility.<sup>46</sup> This was the excuse used for the mobilisation of reserves, which occurred until the end of the year. The manner in which it was carried out within the units of the 1st military district illustrated the reasoning behind the command. In the areas of the 17th corps and other units in Slavonia and Baranja, all military complexes were tightly secured, and in the event of an attack, the command of the corps ordered actions aimed at institutions which organise these attacks, i.e., municipalities, police stations, political party headquarters, military headquarters, training locations for paramilitary units, and so on. Engage for these activities AMU (armoured-mechanised units), and artillery and AAU (anti aircraft units), and as necessary request the use of the air force, in which case you must give the relevant institution a time-limited ultimatum after which you may begin intensive action. The order was issued only to specially selected senior officers.<sup>47</sup> The same measures were undertaken in the units of the 5th military district and the 5th corps of the air force and anti-aircraft defence.<sup>48</sup>

The short-lived war in Slovenia began on the morning June 27th, 1991, when the JNA was sent in to take control of the border with Slovenia and place federal police and customs officers on the border.<sup>49</sup> The conflict, which ended quickly and without intense fighting, led to the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia. For Croatia, this meant that the technical capabilities of the JNA were moving from Slovenia into the neighbouring area of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.<sup>50</sup> During the conflict in Slovenia, armoured and mechanised units of the 1st military district were positioned along the so-called administrative borders of Croatia and Serbia. Their operations were clearly a demonstration of strength meant to underline to the Croatian armed forces the imbalance in amounts and types of weapons between the two sides. An additional threat was the securing of the bridges over the Danube, which was the last of the natural links between Croatia and Serbia. The Commander of the 12th corps, Major-General Mladen Bratic, announced that at the beginning of July they had received several threats from extremists that they will destroy bridges in order to prevent our efforts to stop the ethnic conflict. That is why we are controlling both sides of all bridges

46. Increasing combat readiness of the JNA, The Peoples Army, 9.V.1991., p.5.

47. HIC, Command 17th corps, DT. No. 11/1-93, 14.V.1991., Order.

48. Božidar JAVOROVIC, The Peoples Defence of the City of Zagreb during the Homeland War, Defimi, Zagreb, 1999, pp. 69-70., Fax documents of the Command 10th corps, DT. No. 36-3, 10.V.1991., Order.; Command 141st air force base, Pov. No. 03/1-171, 13.V.1991., Order.

49. Forcing war, The Peoples Army, 6.VII.1991., p.3.

50. A Display of Political Reality, The Peoples Army, 20.VII.1991, p.4; SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, 1st Directorate, No.51-1, 25.VII.1991., Order.

located between Vojvodina and Croatia.<sup>51</sup> The securing of these bridges was a clear signal that Serb tanks were no longer separated from Croatia by the Danube, which was a large natural barrier.<sup>52</sup> The Army's journal *The Peoples Army* explicitly stated that its goal was to prevent the war which is destroying our brotherhood, protect the borders of Yugoslavia, and participate in the battle against paramilitary formations increasingly present in the region. Stationed on the border around Šid were the 1st proletarian brigade from Belgrade and the 453rd mechanised brigade from Sremska Mitrovica.<sup>53</sup> The 36th mechanised brigade from Subotica took control of Baranja and the bridge between Bezdana and Batina, while the 51st mechanised brigade from Pančevo controlled the bridge and region around Bogojevo.<sup>54</sup> Units of the 12th corps controlled the bridge on the Danube between Ilok and Bačka Palanka.<sup>55</sup> The 12th proletarian<sup>56</sup> mechanised brigade in Osijek had part of its troops holding the military garrison, while the other part was securing incoming and outgoing city roads since this is the reasoning behind the exercise.<sup>57</sup>

Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Adžić, heavily favoured the use of armoured and mechanised units<sup>58</sup> which he demonstrated at the beginning of August 1991 in his visit to the 1st proletarian mechanised brigade near Sremska Mitrovica and the 329 armoured brigade in Banja Luka; both visits were covered widely by the military press.<sup>59</sup> In favouring the use of armoured

51. Policemen are antagonizing soldiers day in and out, *The Peoples Army*, 13.VII.1991., p.15.

52. This is confirmed by the order based on the directions of the command of the 1st M.D. given by the commander of the 17th corps Major-General Savo Janković upon the arrival of armoured and mechanized forces on the Croatian border. All units which are on the terrain, are promptly acquainting senior officers and commanders with the landscape and potential activity routes and to execute orders, foresee the engagement of forces, offensives, and achieve preset goals in accordance with received orders, HIC, Command 17th corps, Pov. No. 1085-18, 5.VII.1991, Order.

53. Betrayal opened our eyes, *The Peoples Army*, 13.VII.1991.,p.10., Those fine people, young soldiers, *The Peoples Army*, 25.VII.1991.,p.12.

54. Together for the homeland, *The Peoples Army*, 17.VII.1991., p.10; Military bridges maintained, *The Peoples Army*, 20.VII.1991., p.23; First war experience, *The Peoples Army*,31.VII.1991,p.12-13.

55. Quashed third offensive, *The Peoples Army*, 31.VII.1991., pp.12-13.

56. The term proletarian when used by units refers to the continuation of the tradition of some of the partisan proletarian brigades from WWII.

57. Victory with minimal problems, *The Army (Belgrade)*, journal of the Yugoslav Army, 16.VII.1992.,p.18.

58. Just before the conflict in Slovenia lieutenant general Blagoje Adžić signed a special directive on the 28th of June 1991 for the use of armoured and mechanized units for extraordinary situations. Their duties according to the directive were the

and mechanised units it was clear that the JNA had distanced itself from the officially proclaimed strategy of armed combat.<sup>60</sup> Though initially playing a tactical role, the armoured and mechanised units now assumed an operative and strategic role, which meant that the JNA was adopting a manner of organised combat identical to that of a potential aggressor from the east or west; this scenario had been developed for years during command and military exercises.<sup>61</sup> The reasoning behind such action is quite simple: the military elite completely ignored the human factor and approached the problem exclusively from a technical standpoint. The armoured combat vehicles displayed the great technical superiority of the JNA over the Croatian armed forces.

Preparations for war were also felt with changes in the chain of command. During the conflict in Slovenia significant personnel changes were made in the 5th military district. Slovene Lieutenant General Konrad Kolšek was replaced by Lieutenant General Života Avramovic, who had been commander of the 3rd military district. Base commander Colonel Ljubomir Bajic took

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following: securing the border; intensified guarding of military buildings; participation in guarding firms, public and other objects of particular importance; blocking off certain areas; placing barricades and barriers on roads; patrolling certain areas; displays of power; breaking up destructive demonstrations; finding, quashing and destroying terrorist and other organisations; examination and searching of the terrain; blocking and destroying aggressive groups; quashing armed uprisings and preventing civil war. SSNO, Directorate for armoured and mechanized units, Int. No. 697, 28.VI.1991., Directions for the use of armoured and mechanized units in extraordinary circumstances.

59. Reasons for satisfaction, *The Peoples Army*, 7.VIII.1991, p.4; Life versus problems and violence, *The Peoples Army*, 10.VIII.1991., p.4.

60. *The Strategy of Armed Combat*, pp.196-201.

61. The restructuring of the JNA was followed by intensive preparations for war by the officer corps via the war command exercises *Romanija* from 1986-1990 in which defence from attack from the east and west was exercised. However, after 1991, the JNA after the changes in the east found that the only threat of attack came from the west. It was noted in the mobilisation command of the 5th corps that NATO forces could attack the SFRY using the territory of Hungary and Bulgaria as well as their armed forces. During their exercises the JNA's role was, once they stopped the NATO attack, to commence a counter offensive and return the enemy along the same routes. Experience from these exercises was used in the war against Croatia in 1991, whose armed forces took over NATO's role. The JNA also changed its role in that it transformed from defender to aggressor. Command 30th Partisan division, Str. Pov. No. 651-10, 23.IX.1991; Order for the mobilisation of the 5th corps Đ issue of 30th partd, Feb.1991.; Davor DOMAZET, *How Aggression Against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina Was Prepared or the Transformation of the JNA into a Serbian Imperial Force*, *Croatian International Relations Review*, Vol. V, No. 14-1999, pp.7-9.

command of the 5th corps of the air force and anti-aircraft defence.<sup>62</sup> This was a clear signal to and expression of distrust for non-Serb personnel. Thus personnel transferred to the northwest front had ethnic links to the group that dominated the officer corps. The ethnic structure of the JNA officer corps in Slovenia and Croatia at that time, according to the Command of the 5th military district, favored the Serbs, who comprised 57%; 12% were Croats, 6% Slovenes, 5% Montenegrins, 4% Yugoslavs, and 16% other nationalities.<sup>63</sup>

The war in Slovenia provided an excuse to mobilise part of the units of the 5th Banja Luka corps, the 12th Novi Sad corps, and the 2nd corps in Montenegro. In the 52nd corps in Kosovo, combat units were strengthened to 100% capacity.<sup>64</sup> On the 3rd of August, the ministry of the peoples defence of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced that since the beginning of August some commanders of the JNA combat units were mobilising soldiers, thereby ignoring procedure and the commands of bodies of higher authority, particularly in Han Pijesak.<sup>65</sup> Since the mobilisation was not going according to the JNAs plan, it was decided that the September class of recruits would have their stay extended by twenty days.<sup>66</sup> The delay in the confrontation with Croatia had a negative effect on the combat readiness of the JNA, since they were unable to arm their reserves forever.

The war had began without any official declaration.<sup>67</sup> Villages inhabited by Serbs, such as Tenja near Osijek, Mirkovci near Vinkovci, and Borovo Selo near Vukovar became support positions for the rebel Serbs, četniks, and the JNA in the war. In July, četnik groups and rebel Serb units with heavy weaponry began moving into Croatian territory and ethnically cleansing all non-Serbs. Despite the power imbalance, every attempt of Croat forces

62. New placements, *The Peoples Army*, 6.VII.1991., p.4.

63. All that is Yugoslav had been attacked, *The Peoples Army*, 6.VII.1991., p.6.

64. We shall defend a united Yugoslavia, *The Peoples Army*, 6.VII.1991., p.42; Determined to defend the country, *The Peoples Army*, 6.VII.1991., p.42; Eager tank and artillery experts, *The Peoples Army*, 10.VII.1991., p.18; Defence of the homeland is a holy duty *The Peoples Army*, 13.VII.1991., p.44; Mobilisation: the parties target, *The Peoples Army*, 22.VIII.1991., pp.20-1.

65. Promoting self-destruction, *The Peoples Army*, 7.VIII.1991., p.7; Obligatory Military Service in BiH and Macedonia only, *The Peoples Army*, 14.VIII.1991., p.13.

66. Supporting trust in the army, *The Peoples Army*, 22.VIII.1991., pp.6-7.

67. Retired generals of the JNA, among which was Đoko Jovanovic from WW2, added oil to the fire. At the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the uprising in Croatia he called for those present to reassemble the 6th Lika brigade and finally complete the unfinished task Demancipation from the Ustaša vampires. Resistance to aggression, *The Peoples Army*, 31.VII.1991., p.14

to overpower the rebels and their confederates brought in from Serbia, as was the case in Mirkovci and Tenja on the 5-7th of July 1991, was prevented by the armoured and mechanised units of the federal army. The JNA openly took the side of the četniks, defined in certain places the zones it would place under its protection, as in Mirkovci, and consequently attempted to expand into key objects under Croatian control.<sup>68</sup>

On July 11th, the rebel Serbs mobilised their headquarters and units,<sup>69</sup> and then under the protection of armoured and mechanised units of the federal army assembled their paramilitary structure. Its organisation began immediately after the Knin incidents in August 1990. The process was slow and relatively ineffective due to conflicts among the rebel leaders. The climax occurred in mid-1991 in Knin, when several paramilitary armies were formed. Along with police and the Territorial Defence inherited from before, or, more accurately, appropriated from the legal components of the Republic of Croatia, other small units were formed, ranging from the special units of Captain Dragan to various partisan armed units whose manpower came mainly from Serbia.<sup>70</sup> The police was under the command of interior minister Mile Martić, and the territorial defence of Serb Krajina (SAO Krajina) Premier Mile Babić, who was also minister of defence. The combat readiness of these units was limited, though with their heavy weaponry they were superior to the Croatian army and police until the end of September 1991. These groups were not capable of executing complicated tasks, and their total collapse and military defeat by Croatian units was prevented due to assistance from the federal army and its buffer zones. In late July, regional headquarters were organised in Kordun and Banovina.<sup>71</sup> At a government meeting of the SAO Krajina on August 1st, 1991, it was decided that the armed forces be composed of the territorial defence under the command of the premier of SAO Krajina. In August, the Ministry of Defence issued a decision regarding the organisation of the defence system, in which the headquarters of the territorial defence of Krajina would oversee the municipal headquarters of TD Knin, Benkovac, Obrovac, Gračac, Donji Lapac, Titova Korenica, and the zone headquarters of the TD of Kordun and Banija. The interior minister Mile Martić was named deputy commander of the TD and member of the headquarters of the TD for police units.<sup>72</sup> The organisation of operative zones of the TD SAO Krajina was conducted on August

68. Command of the Vinkovci garrison, Pov. No. 42-1, 26.VII.1991., ZNG Vinkovci, Announcement.

69. Premijer/Minister of Defence, , No. 142-91-3, 11.VII.1991., Order.

70. Command 5th corps, RV and PVO, Security Body, SP No. 6-369, 14.V.1991., Security Sector KRV and PVO, Notes on the situation in SO Vukovar.

71. SAO Krajina, Government, No.157/91-1., 26.VII.1991., Order.

20th, 1991. The 1st operative zone was located in northern Dalmatia, the 2nd in Kordun and the 3rd in Banovina.<sup>73</sup>

The organisation of the Serb rebel armed forces was implemented parallel to attacks aimed at cleansing the terrain of Croats. After eastern Slavonia, the second critical zone opened up at the end of July in Banovina, when the TD of the rebel Serbs from Dvor na Uni, organised as the 1st Dvor order, participated in a battle to completely emancipate the municipality.<sup>74</sup> The Croatian villages of Zamlača and Struga were seized, while the mechanised unit of the 329th armoured brigade stood nearby awaiting completion of the offensive.<sup>75</sup> Farther north, the armoured battalion of the 51st mechanised brigade attacked the police station in Glina, doing its part in the ethnic cleansing of Croats in Banovina.<sup>76</sup> The larger part of the 51st mechanised brigade in eastern Slavonia activated itself as well. After the attack of Serb paramilitary units on the police station in Dalj on August 1st, the brigade sided openly with additional air support with the četniks in battle, which resulted was the deaths of several dozen, and the expulsion of hundreds Croats from Dalj, Aljmaš, and Erdut. The majority of the brigade then continued westward towards the village of Serb-inhabited Bijelo Brdo where they hunkered down.<sup>77</sup> After cleansing Erdut, Dalj, and Aljmaš they proceeded to consolidate the communications sectors of the 12th and 17th corpses in order to survey paramilitary formations Đas they referred to Croatian units, as well as to wage similar joint endeavours.<sup>78</sup> By the end of August the 36th mechanised brigade had occupied Baranja, reinforced by četniks and the remaining Serb paramilitary groups<sup>79</sup>, while the armoured and mechanised units of the 17th corpus were preparing for an offensive targeting

72. SAO Krajina, Government, Premier, No. 179/91-1, 8.VIII.1991., Order.

73. SAO Krajina, Government, Premier, Str. Pov. No. 189/91-1, 20.VIII.1991., Order.

74. The first infantry battalion, Bulletin of the 33rd infantry brigade (Dvor na Uni), Dec. 1994, p.3

75. SAO Krajina, Municipality of Dvor, HQ TD, Second battalion, Commander of HQ, Decision 12.IX.1991; Report of the assistant to the Superintendent of HQ for ONP 329, armoured brigade, Command 329 ab. An officer from HQ who was there at the time was not willing to establish a buffer zone and prevent an attack from the Serb TD on the Croatian villages.

76. Justified behaviour of the army, The Peoples Army, 31.VII.1991., p.6.

77. Military court Osijek, Kir-36/92, 6.III.1992., Questioning of L.K. unit commander of 51st mechanized brigade of the JNA., Disarmourment or war, The Peoples Army, 22.VIII.1991., p.13; War Đ the raw school of tactics, The Peoples Army, 19.III.1992., p.24.

78. HIC, Command of the 17th corpus, Str.pov. No.11/1566-2, 4.8.1991., Command 158th maabr. Orders.

bridges on the Drava and Sava rivers to prevent a Croatian counter-attack.<sup>80</sup>

On August 13th in western Slavonia, the local Serbs proclaimed the Autonomous Serb District (SAO) of western Slavonia and annexed it to the SAO Krajina. On August 16th, their paramilitary units in Okučani attacked units of the Croatian police and the National Guard Corps. In light of this attack, the government of the Republic of Croatia urgently requested a meeting of the Yugoslav Presidency.<sup>81</sup> On August 16th, combat units of the 265th mechanised brigade were sent to the crisis areas.<sup>82</sup> Croatian policemen in Okučani were also attacked by part of the 329th armoured brigade, which had been brought in from Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>83</sup> The leadership of the Republic of Croatia accused the army of open aggression but the military court rejected the charge as unfounded, stating that it is absolutely logical that the forces of the 1st military district and units of the Banja Luka corps were summoned to prevent an inter-ethnic confrontation in its zone of responsibility.<sup>84</sup> The situation in Croatia and the significance of the sites of confrontation were so obvious that a journalist from the Sarajevo daily *Oslobođenje* asked the Command of the Joint Chiefs if the confrontation line in Virovitica-Karlovac-Karlobag in Croatia, which is already in some places being described as the boundary of a rump Yugoslavia, Serboslavia, or greater Serbia, represents what will ultimately become part of a new country.<sup>85</sup>

The units of the JNA in Croatia and Slovenia were placed in a difficult situation when Croatian and Slovene recruits for obligatory military service stopped reporting. Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were also reluctant to send recruits after the release of the June 1990 generation of recruits. The obligatory military service system in western Yugoslavia completely disintegrated and the JNA was left without soldiers after having been forced to release them after one year of obligatory service. The released soldiers in some areas could not be replaced, and consequently the JNA lacked sufficient forces to maintain the buffer zones and support staff in their bases. The JNA's role in northwest Dalmatia in the operative zone of the 9th Knin corps and eastern Slavonia and Baranja became obvious. After a three day session of the

79. Šeksž hawks are flying low, *The Peoples Army*, 7.IX.1991., p.23; Along the line that ties and divides *The Peoples Army*, 9.X.1991., pp.11-12.

80. HIC, Command 17th corps, Str.pov.No. 1085-104, 24.VIII.1991., Warning.

81. A Chronology of the war, p.84.

82. The man of crises areas *The Peoples Army*, 22.XII.1991., p.12.

83. The road to war paved with victory, *The Serbian Army*, 9.V.1994., p.14.

84. Pictures of war reappearing, *The Peoples Army*, 22.VIII.1991., p.12.

85. Solutions which will appeal to all of our peoples, *The Peoples Army*, 24.VIII.1991., p.9.

Croatian parliament, a decision was brought on August 3rd, requesting the JNA to withdraw to its garrisons without delay and within an certain proscribed period to totally withdraw from the territory of the Republic of Croatia.<sup>86</sup> Since the JNA completely ignored the parliamentary decision and continued its aggression, Croatian forces began applying pressure on the garrisons at the beginning of September. The order of the president of the Presidency of SFRY, Stipe Mesic, (September 11th) for the units of the JNA to withdraw to its garrisons within 48 hours was dismissed as illegal by the military leadership. The military brass also dismissed notions that rebel Serb units designated territorial defence were acting under the command and in concert with the JNA.<sup>87</sup> A few days later the Commander of JNA Military Headquarters General Adžić repeated the same fabrications in an interview to BBC.<sup>88</sup>

The blockade of the garrisons forced the JNA to expedite its plans due to the potential threat that the Croatians could obtain heavy weaponry and modern equipment. This was illustrated in the threat made by the Command Headquarters to the Croatian political and military leadership that every attack and captured complex of the JNA will result in the destruction of one complex of vital interest to the Republic of Croatia and that for every attacked and seized garrison one vital complex in the city where the garrison is located will be destroyed. This was also a warning to civilians to withdraw from those locations<sup>89</sup> before the federal army initiates its next phase of attacks in Croatia: a strategic offensive operation. The operation was followed by a decision of the incomplete Presidency of the SFRY which introduced work conditions during threat of war and assumed certain rights of the parliament of the SFRY, which could not be convened. According to this decision the Presidency of the SFRY makes decisions based on a majority vote of the members of the Presidency of SFRY present. Dr. Branko Kostic, vice president of the Presidency, practically usurped the position of president after this decision and announced: the Presidency of the SFRY will not use military force to impose its will upon any of the peoples in Yugoslavia.<sup>90</sup> Precisely at this moment, the majority of JNA resources was imposing the will of the political and military elite of the largest ethnic group in SFRY (the Serbs), onto the second largest (the Croats).

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86. Terrorizing the truth, The Peoples Army, 7.VIII.1991., p.5.

87. Unauthorized and single-handedly giving orders The Peoples Army, 14.IX.1991., p.6.

88. My orientation is - Yugoslavia The Peoples Army, 18.IX.1991., p.5.

89. The last warning The Peoples Army, 2.X.1991., p.7.

90. Threat of war determines working conditions The Peoples Army, 5.X.1991.

The operation began at the end of September, and its goal was to defeat the Croatian army if circumstances permit, achieve full co-operation with Serb units in Serb Krajina, and allow for the complete withdrawal of remaining JNA units in Slovenia.<sup>91</sup> The operational plan foresaw fifteen to eighteen armoured, mechanised and infantry brigades, in addition to the previously engaged units of the JNA. According to General Veljko Kadijevic the basic reasoning behind the offensives is to achieve a complete blockade of Croatia from air and sea; and organising attack routes of the main forces of the JNA to link liberated Serb regions in Croatia with JNA garrisons deep inside Croatian territory. With this in mind, Croatia was to be divided along the routes Gradiška-Virovitica; Bihac-Karlovac-Zagreb; Knin-Zadar; Mostar-Split. The strongest armoured and mechanised divisions were to liberate eastern Slavonia, quickly continue westward, merge with units in western Slavonia, and go on to Zagreb and Varaždin; that is, toward the Slovene border. At the same time, they were to land-lock Dubrovnik with strong units from the direction of Herceg Novi-Trebinje, and then continue into the Neretva valley and combine forces with the units on the Mostar-Split route. When they reached the relevant objects, they would then secure and maintain the borders of Serb Krajina in Croatia, withdraw the remaining JNA troops from Slovenia, and subsequently withdraw the JNA from Croatia; 10-15 days would be necessary for the mobilisation, preparation for mobilisation, or remobilisation of units, and for their arrival at the operational routes, depending on the combat readiness of the units and their distance from these routes.<sup>92</sup> In the first days of the operation, the Federal Secretary of Defence General Kadijevic announced that at this moment the Army desires only to maintain control in the crisis areas, protect the Serb civilians from harassment and destruction, and free members of the JNA and their families, the prerequisite being the defeat of the Ustaša forces.<sup>93</sup>

Croatia was to be divided up, and forced to acquiesce and accept all Serb demands. However, a poor showing of reserves in the 1st and 3rd military districts placed a strain on these exalted plans.<sup>94</sup> The federal army tried to alleviate the problem by accepting volunteers, for which a special directive was drafted. According to it, the volunteers were given the same status and rights as military personnel and soldiers carrying out their obliga-

91. V. KADIJEVIC, *My view of the break-up*, p.134.

92. V. KADIJEVIC, *My view of the break-up*, pp.135-36.

93. Neo-nazis at work in Croatia *The Peoples Army*, 5.X.1991., p.5.

94. B. JOVIC, *The Last Days of the SFRY*, pp.385-386; Ofelija BACKOVIC, Miloš VASIC, Aleksandar VASOVIC, *Who goes wilfully into a military mobilisation crisis* in an analytical view of media reporting, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia- Herzegovina 1991-1995*, Zagreb-Sarajevo 1999, p355-356.

tory military service. Each volunteer was required to sign a statement in which he/she pledged to uphold existing federal laws and other acts and orders which regulate affairs, life, and work in the Yugoslav Peoples army.<sup>95</sup> By this, the JNA had tacitly accepted waging war alongside various partisan Serb paramilitary units. Their shared aspiration, a Great Serbia, eliminated ideological or political differences that might previously have existed.

During the aggression against Croatia, the rebel Croatian Serbs increased their personnel significantly. On the 20th of September, a large number of commissioned and non-commissioned officers was sent to the headquarters of the TD SAO Krajina and the operative zones Banija-Kordun and Lika to command the Serb paramilitary forces.<sup>96</sup> This confirmed the JNAs official legalisation of the so-called territorial defence of SAO Krajina, which became its partner in combat. At the end of September, the paramilitary forces finally organised themselves. The region of northern Dalmatia and Lika was divided into two zones, zone 1 for Dalmatia, under the command of headquarters of the TD SAO Krajina, and Lika for the 2nd zone. The regions of Kordun and Banovina were merged into the 3rd operative zone.<sup>97</sup> The other armed component used for combat offensives, the police, was placed under the command of the territorial defence on the 9th of October.<sup>98</sup>

The JNA units concentrated their offensive operations on eastern Slavonia. Armoured and mechanised brigade groups in eastern Slavonia and Srijem, composed of the 12th corps and 1st proletarian mechanised brigade corps and backed by the 24th and 37th corps, had been operatively developed and engaged for weeks already in combat offensives prior to the commencement of the operation. The 12th corps had participated in combat offensives around Vukovar from the 25th of August. After taking control of Baranja, the corps directed the majority of its units towards Vukovar while the support units were attacking Osijek. At the beginning of September, the military media openly reported that the JNA air force is contributing greatly to the liberation of Vukovar where a critical battle is being fought in order to assist the Serb rebels.<sup>99</sup> The battle for Vukovar, which lasted much longer than expected, proved for the units of the 1st military district to be their most difficult assignment. Vukovar was becoming less a military problem than a blatant example of JNA aggression in sup-

95. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, III Directorate, Pov. Br.2391-1, 13.IX.1991., Directions for the recruiting of volunteers in the JNA.

96. SAO Krajina, HQ TD, No. 76/91. 25.11.91, Order No.24-175, Instructions upon receiving of volunteers in the JNA.

97. SAO Krajina, Government, Premier, Pov. 1/1-91, 5.X.1991., Announcement.

98. SAO Krajina, Government, Premier, No. 2/1-91, 9.X.1991., Order.

99. Still under a shower of shelling, The Peoples Army, 18.IX.1991., p.11.

port of the Serb cause. Logically, the city should simply have been blockaded by smaller units and bypassed; this, however, was obviously not the plan. In its westward advance towards central Croatia, the federal army wanted to leave behind it a clean slate. On the 31st of October and the 1st of November, General Adžić, the commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the SFRY armed forces, visited the units of the 1st military district to lift their waning morale.<sup>100</sup> Vukovar was finally captured on the 18th of November, 1991, by the forces of Operative group North, under the command of Major General Andrija Biorčević, Operative group South under the command of Colonel Mile Mrkšić, and air support from the 1st airborne corps, commanded by Colonel Branislav Petrović. The operation itself was executed under General Života Panic, commander of the 1st military district.<sup>101</sup> The capture of the city was described by journalists in the following manner: The liberators, units of the JNA, TD, and volunteers, went house by house, whereby they were considerate of the lives of the citizens, displayed their combat skills in inhabited areas, and affirmed their humanity and bravery<sup>102</sup>; also, Vukovar is not a captured city. It is a city which has been liberated from the darkest neo-fascist and Ustaša ideology. Thus there is no place for doubt as to whether the destruction could have been avoided. The neo-fascism was so aggressive and deep-rooted that all available force and methods were required to destroy it. There was no other option.<sup>103</sup>

Participating in the battle for Vukovar were the 1st proletarian mechanised division corps, the 12th, 36th, 51st, and 453 mechanised brigades, motorized brigade corps, the 80th motorized brigade, the 211th and 252nd armoured brigade, the 20th partisan brigade, the 16th mixed artillery brigade, the 63rd airborne brigade, units of the TD from Sremska Mitrovica, Kragujevac, and volunteers from Belgrade, Novi Sad, Ruma, Inđija, Sombor, Smederevo, and Smederevska Palanka. Local Serb rebel groups from Negoslavac and Vukovar also participated.<sup>104</sup>

The elite unit of the federal army, the 1st proletarian mechanised division corps backed by the 252nd armoured brigade from ~~Kraljevo, attacked positions~~ south and southeast of the units of the

100. Recognition of the brave, The Peoples Army, 6.XI.1991., p.5.

101. SSNO, Cabinet of the federal secretary, No. 1023-2, 21.XI.1991., Commendation of the superintendent of the HQ- Supreme command.

102. Vukovar liberated, The Peoples Army, 20.XI.1991., p.3.

103. Sacrificed for separatism, The Peoples Army, 23.XI.1991., p.3.

104. The legend of Mitnica destroyed, The Peoples Army, 2.XI.1991., p.22; Village of Borovo about to fall, The Peoples Army, 9.XI.1991, p.11.; The dawn of victory, The Peoples Army, 9.XI.91, p.14; Vukovar in the hands of its liberators, The Peoples Army, 20.XI.91, p.10-11; TD Negoslavac's contribution to the liberation of Vukovar, The Peoples Army, 7.XII.91, p.26; A breath of life for the city, The

12th corpus. The aggression on Slavonia began when its 3rd proletarian mechanised brigade corps attacked Vinkovci from the direction of Ilača-Orolik-é akovci at the end of September. Its commander subsequently boasted that in only three days we liberated all the villages between Šid and Mirkovci.<sup>105</sup> The division corps arrived in the greater area of Vinkovci by the beginning of October. In October, along with the 252nd armoured brigade and volunteer units Šumadija and Lepenica, they captured the villages of Dželetovac, Bapska, and Šaregrad.<sup>106</sup> In an interview for the military journal, *The Peoples Army*, division commander General Dragoljub Arandelovic bragged that his unit has cleansed and is holding firmly the area between the Danube and Bosut, and local government is being organised in the area.<sup>107</sup> This display of honesty clearly illustrated the core and substance of the JNAs assignment of the ethnic cleansing of Croatian territory of Croats and other non-Serbian ethnic groups and the installation of Serbian rule. The prime example of the workings of the 1st proletarian mechanised division corps is Ilok, which they ethnically cleansed; this was confirmed in the agreement made on October 14th, 1991, in Šid.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to attacking Vukovar and Vinkovci, Serb forces also attacked Osijek after having seized Baranja at the beginning of September. The 12th proletarian mechanised brigade from the villages of Stara Tenja, Silaš, and Trpinja, carried out combat offensives and shelling of Croatian villages and Klisa, reinforced by parts of the 51st mechanised and 544th motorized brigades.<sup>109</sup>

The 5th corpus launched combat offensives in western Slavonia throughout September. Contrary to how the large scale operation had been envisioned, the JNA was only temporarily engaged, which was a result of the rebellion of the Serb population, which had assumed massive proportions.<sup>110</sup> At the beginning of September, the JNA seized Okučani and directed its offensives towards Novska and Pakrac. Leading the offensive was the 329th armoured brigade, reinforced periodically from the beginning of September by units of the 5th corpus, and at mid-month by parts

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*Peoples Army*, 7.XII.91, p.21; Good experience for tankists, *Army*, 10.VIII.95, p.15.

105. There is no peace in Mirkovci, *The Peoples Army*, 19.X.1991, p.8.

106. Command 1st pmdc, Str. Pov. No. 851-18, 4.X.91., Command 252nd abr, Order; Even deserters are returning, *The Peoples Army*, 13.XI.1991, p.19.

107. Under the war flag as once before, *The Peoples Army*, 2.X.1991, p.4.

108. Agreement dated 14.X.1991 between representatives of the city of Ilok and the JNA,; Under the war flag as once before, *The Peoples Army*, 2.X.1991, p.4.

109. Šeksž hawks are flying low, *The Peoples Army*, 7.IX.1991, p.23; After several challenges in combat and victors, *The Peoples Army*, 2.XI.1991, p.12; Dying hope, *The Peoples Army*, 30.I.1992, p.26.

110. V. KADIJEVIC, My view of the break-up, pp. 138-139.

of the 16th proletarian motorized brigade, the 5th partisan, the 2nd partisan and the 343rd motorized brigade, subsequent to being reinforced by reserves from Bosanska Krajina.<sup>111</sup> Since the mobilised forces of the 5th corps were insufficient, they were periodically reinforced by units brought in from Serbia Ð the 46th partisan brigade from é aćak, a battalion of the 84th motorized brigade from Bitolja, and a division of multiple rocket launchers of the 150th mixed artillery brigade from Vranj.<sup>112</sup> Though the local Serb turnout was massive, these forces failed to break through to Bjelovar and Varaždin to join forces with the 32nd corps in Varaždin, Bjelovar, and Virovitica, which would have consolidated a Serb victory in Slavonia. After the surrender of the 32nd corps, the forces of the 5th corps concentrated their activities in the direction of Novska-Kutina-Zagreb, intending to reinforce its areas around Jasenovac and Hrvatska Kostajnica. Along the secondary direction of Lipik-Pakrac-Daruvar, the local forces of the HQ TD SAO Western Slavonia executed combat offensives backed by the 5th corps. Their instructions were to control the area until the arrival of the 12th corps and 1st proletarian mechanised division corps from the east. Towards the end of October, both groups were stopped, and at the beginning of November they were forced to retreat towards Okučani and the Sava River, which botched the signing of a cease-fire.<sup>113</sup>

In central Croatia the command of the 5th military district planned to carry out its offensive by concentrating several operative groups in numerous directions: the 1st operative group, composed of parts of the 10th corps, the territorial defence of the rebel Serbs,<sup>114</sup> and reinforcements from Serbia, had been assigned to reach the Kupa river along the Petrinja-Karlovac line and allow for the withdrawal of the surrounded forces in the Karlovac and Zagreb garrisons; the supplementary tactical group from the 5th Banja Luka corps was assigned to cleanse the areas from Plitvice through Slunj to Karlovac; the majority of the 10th corps with part of the units from the 5th military district -excluding for the forces of the 1st operative group - were to withdraw

111. Heroes and knights, Krajina soldier, journal of the 1st krajina corps SRA, July 1993, p.32; The road to war paved with victory, Serb Army, 9.V.1994, p.14.

112. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, Operations centre, No. 53-3, 11.V.1992., Command 5th,10th,13th and 17th corpuses and 4th MD, Order; O.BACKOVIC. M.VASIC, A.VSOVIC, Who goes voluntarily into a military-mobilisation crisis Ðan analysis of media reporting, The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995, p.359.

113. Rudi Stipćić, We finally got going..., Zagreb 1996, pp.84-87.

114. Rebel Serb units from Kordun and Banovina were on the 19th of October 1991 placed under the command of the 1st operative group and from this date act and are to be utilised as an organic part of the JNA units in combat zones wherever JNA units are located. Command 1st OG, Str.pov. No. 100-233, 19.X.1991., Order.

through Velika Gorica towards Petrinja, and then towards Dvor na Uni and Bosanski Novi; the 13th corps in Rijeka and Delnice were to organise an offensive in the general direction of Rijeka-Delnice-Vrbovsko-Slunj-Plitvice, along with defending the garrisons; parts of the 32nd corps in Bjelovar and Koprivnica were to break through towards Bjelovar-Grubišino Polje-Daruvar and join the forces of the 5th corps, which were operating from deep inside the territory; the offensives of the 1st operative group and the withdrawal of forces from the 10th, 13th, and 32nd corps and the individual units of the 5th military district were supported by heavy artillery and the air force, which were assigned to attack vital complexes in Zagreb.<sup>115</sup> The orders of the 5th military district made clear the intent to withdraw forces from areas ethnically unfavourable towards areas with Serb majorities, and to cut into the border zone through offensives of areas where Serbs comprised the majority. This was apparent in the case of Kordun, whose ethnic borders the JNA intended to seize while purging the Croat inhabitants behind the scenes.

The intricate plans of the 5th military district failed due to the surrender of the 32nd corps and the blockade of most of the 10th and 13th corps, and the poor showing of reserves from Serbia and Bosanska Krajina. An attempt by the 1st operative group to break through to Zagreb via Turopolje and extract the surrounded forces of the 10th corps was botched. The group managed to reach the Krupa River and the outskirts of Karlovac, which was no great feat considering the favourable ethnic composition of that area. Attempts to break through to Sisak, Mošćenica, Komarevo, and Slunj proved unsuccessful, leaving the demarcation line inactive in December.<sup>116</sup> In the central and southeast zone of the 5th military district, altercations continued to the end of the year. In light of the fact that the 13th corps from Rijeka and the majority of units in Istria and Gorski Kotar were surrounded and isolated from the remainder of the corps, combat offensives were undertaken in southern Lika by the 9th corps, while the rest of Lika and Kordun were handed over to the 3rd operative group under the direct command of the 5th military district. By mid-November in this area, the JNA seized Slunj with the assistance of local Serb units and drove out Croat inhabitants, thus creating a compact ethnic zone with a Serb majority.<sup>117</sup>

The 9th corps, reinforced by local Serb forces, led combat offensives in northern Dalmatia. The corps completed its oper-

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115. Božidar JAVOROVIC, *The Peoples Defence of Zagreb during the Homeland War*, 1999, p.72

116. Combat offensive know how, 1st operative group.

ations quickly, due to the superior positioning of most of its forces. It was one of the few operative groups that did not have major problems with troop reinforcements, some coming from its own area, and others from Montenegro, while the majority, several thousand reserves, came from Serbia, mainly Šumadija.<sup>118</sup> They were also reinforced with armoured and motorized units from the 1st and 3rd military districts. The cleansing of Kijevo and Kruševo at the beginning of September allowed for an advance on the Adriatic cities. Beginning in October, the 9th corps, along with the 8th naval sector, the 1st corps of the air force, and paramilitary and volunteer units, cleansed the hinterlands of Šibenik and Zadar in aggressive offensives.<sup>119</sup>

The navy of the armed forces of SFRY also assisted (September 17th, 1991) by barricading Adriatic ports and supplying artillery support to units of the naval sector and infantry troops in their attacks on Dubrovnik, Split, Zadar, Šibenik, and Ploče.<sup>120</sup> In southern Croatia, two operative groups of the federal army collaborated with the navy. Activities in the direction Mostar-Split were assigned to the 37th Užice corps from Serbia. On September 20th, parts of the corps began seizing the area of eastern and central Herzegovina.<sup>121</sup> However, due to a poor turnout of reserves the assignment ended up being the securing of the airport in Mostar and terrifying the non-Serb inhabitants of the area. Forces of the 2nd Podgorica corps and 9th naval sector Boka were active east of the 37th corps. Their activities in the direction of Dubrovnik were co-ordinated by two operative groups for southern Herzegovina and Dalmatia.<sup>122</sup> The offensive on Dubrovnik began on the 1st of October. The village of Ravno in eastern Herzegovina suffered relentless Serb aggression; it was burned to the ground and its inhabitants driven out.<sup>123</sup> By the 5th of October Prevlaka was cleansed; pressure on Dubrovnik fol-

117. Command 5th m.d., Str.pov.No. 09/75-1034, 10.XI.1991., Command TG-2, Order; Sup. HQ II.OZ., 10.III.1992., Information regarding problems of the TD in Lika.

118. The army strikes hard, *The Peoples Army*, 9.X.91, p.35; V.KADIJEVIC, My view of the break-up, p.139.

119. Working map 9th corps: Decision of the commander 9th corps for execution of the Coast 91 offensive, copy No.1; Decision, Minister of the Interior SAO Krajina, Coast 91, Air support plan of the offensive of the 9th corps, Coast 91; Command 9th C., Str.pov.No. 747-1, 2.XII.1991., Paper for the Headquarters of the Supreme Command.

120. Command of the naval district, Str.pov. No. 167-1/47-911, 20IX.1991., Orders for forces of ND, oper. no.1; The dead letter of a ceasefire, *The Peoples Army*, 21.IX.1991, p.6.

121. Command 9th corps, 23.IX.91, Command 180th mtbr., Order to regroup Op. No.14.

122. The truth has overcome all barriers, *The Peoples Army*, 9.I.1992, p.14.

lowed and it was surrounded and cut off from the rest of Croatia. According to the commander of the 2nd operative group, General é okic, the republic of Montenegro provided him with police forces in order to secure liberated territory, which along with federal army reserves provided assistance.<sup>124</sup> His successor, Lieutenant General Pavle Strugar, made a public offer to move the inhabitants of Dubrovnik out of the city at the end of October.<sup>125</sup> When the offer was rejected, the surrounded city was attacked with mortar fire, most intensively at the beginning of December, 1991.<sup>126</sup>

The magnificent operation planned by the command of the JNA was less successful than expected. Infantry units of the JNA were stopped in December, while the aerial assassination attempt on the President of the Republic of Croatia on the 7th of October 1991 was also unsuccessful.<sup>127</sup> After part of the JNAs assignments were completed, a stalemate evolved which in the long run worked against Serb interests. Their combat forces were approaching their goals but did not have the strength to continue and finish the job. Another, smaller component of the force that was to participate in the first group was undersized and surrounded by Croatian cities. Once the 32nd corps had surrendered, the possibility existed that the Croatian army would seize their weaponry and commence a strategic counter-offensive. The Croatian problem was that some of their necessary forces were engaged in the garrison blockade. Successful offensives by Croatian forces in November and December 1991 illustrated that a continuation of the battle would be detrimental to the Serbs. Subsequently, the JNA had to be satisfied with limited success, hoping that the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations arriving in the war zone would safeguard their territorial acquisitions. Under pressure from the international community, a compromise was reached with the signing of an agreement on the 22nd of October 1991, under which the remaining forces of the 5th military district of the JNA were to evacuate Croatia and leave the confiscated weapons of the territorial defence to the Croats.<sup>128</sup> The evacuation was completed on the 30th of December 1991.<sup>129</sup> After the signing of an unconditional cease-fire agreement in Sarajevo (2nd of January 1992) by representatives of the Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav Peoples Army, the hostility was notice-

123. Smail é EKIC, *The Aggression on Bosnia and genocide of the Bosniaks 1991-1993*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1994., p.171.

124. *The truth has overcome all barriers*, The Peoples Army, 9.I.1992., p.14.

125. Naval sector Boka, 26.X.1991, HQ Dubrovnik and the European mission.

126. *Chronology of the war*, p.118.

127. *Chronology of the war*, p.100.

128. Agreement between representatives of the government of the Republic of Croatia and the JNA, 22.XI.1991 in Zagreb.

ably reduced. United Nations peacekeeping forces began arriving and positioning themselves at the demarcation lines.<sup>130</sup> At the end of 1991, on the 30th of December, the JNA was reorganised and the 5th military district eliminated. The 2nd military district was established and located in Sarajevo. Incorporated into its structure were the 10th corps from the former 5th military district, the 4th, 5th and 17th corps from the 1st military district, and the 9th corps from the former naval district. Incorporated into the structure of the 10th corps were three operative groups: the 6th in Lika, the 7th in Banovina, and the 8th in Kordun, which came about with the reorganisation of the 1st and 3rd operative groups. Armed forces of the JNA from eastern Herzegovina and Montenegro oriented towards southern Croatia became part of the 4th military district.<sup>131</sup>

The first few months of 1992 marked the beginning of a brief period during which the JNA had two main tasks. It had to withdraw from the territory of the Republic of Croatia and it had to expend great efforts to preserve its territorial acquisitions from the war with Croatian armed forces. This entailed reorganisation of the rebel Serb armed forces from a Territorial Defence structure into an army, and forming border units and a police brigade.<sup>132</sup> At the end of February 1992, based on orders of the Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff AF SFRY dated February 27th, military reorganisation began in the areas the JNA had temporarily seized from the Republic of Croatia. Headquarters of the territorial defence of the Serb Republic of Krajina and six zone stations of the TD with accompanying brigades were formed.<sup>133</sup> In mid-March the Joint Chiefs of Staff AF SFRY dispatched to the Republic HQ of the Territorial Defence of Krajina Instructions for the operation of HQ and units of territorial defence in preparing for demobilisation and remobilisation, in which basic information for demobilisation and mobilisation activities were given for the period upon withdrawal of JNA forces from Krajina.<sup>134</sup> In accordance with the orders of the Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces SFRY (March 24th, 1992) several organisational changes were made in the territorial defence of the Serb republic of Krajina. At the main headquarters level, a background base was formed in Knin, and in the zone headquarters heavy artillery

129. Evacuation is complete, The Peoples Army, 4.I.1992., p.4.

130. Command 8th OG, Str. pov. No. 2-254, 16.III.1991, Order.

131. Four military districts educated, The Peoples Army, 4.I.1992., p.4; Command 2nd military district DT no. 1-2, 5.I.1992., Command 10th C., Order.

132. Command 8th OG, Str.pov. no.2-302, 31.III.1992, Command 10th corps, regular combat report.

133. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, III Directorate, D.T. no. 892-2, 02.III.1992., Order.

134. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, III Directorate, Str.pov. no. 1116-1. 12.III.1992., Instructions.

divisions, mixed anti-armour divisions, light artillery units of the anti-aircraft defence, and background bases were formed.<sup>135</sup>

Along with the organisation of local Serb paramilitary units, a directorate for special police forces under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence was also organised. The directorate had jurisdiction over police brigades formed according to the same orders in Knin, Korenica, Vojnic, Petrinja, Okučani, Vukovar, Beli Manastir, and Benkovac.<sup>136</sup> Commissioned officers ranking from captain to colonel were sent on April 22nd to the territorial defence of the Serb republic of Krajina (SRK). Headquarters commander of the territorial defence SRK issued them assignments and placement orders. This experienced command structure composed of active officers was to create the conditions for a effective engagement by the forces of the rebel Serbs.<sup>137</sup> By the end of April the JNA managed to do what the Serb rebel leaders had not succeeding in doing since August 1990. Three separated areas or autonomous Serbian districts, as they were dubbed by their creators, were combined into a united Serb republic of Krajina, the first of the two Serb republics outside Serbia proper.

Handing the zones of responsibility over to UNPROFOR began in mid-May 1992, after which only armed police units remained in the region of so-called Krajina. The armed forces were demobilised and transformed into local headquarters.<sup>138</sup> This marked the end of official JNA engagement in Croatia and the withdrawal of its units and citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from the occupied regions of the Republic of Croatia. The JNA ordered the army to withdraw all material and technical resources and personnel from the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina by May 19th, 1992; this order was also binding for Croatia. The 592nd motorized brigade was to withdraw from Glina to Vranje, the 46th partisan brigade from Okučani to é ačak, the 51st mechanised brigade from Topusko to Novi Sad, a battalion of the 84th motorized brigade from Okučani to Zaječar, the 1st battalion 592nd motorized brigade from Knin to Vranje, the artillery division of the 102nd mixed anti-armour artillery brigade from Plitvice to Negotin, and a multi-missile rocket launcher division of the 150th mixed artillery brigade from Okučani to Vranje. Units that were unable to transfer their equipment surrendered it to a unit assigned by the 2nd military district command.<sup>139</sup>

In accordance with the Serb position that it had a right to neighbouring land going back several decades, the war waged

135. SSNO, Str.pov. no. 1349-1, 24.III.1992., Order.

136. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, III Directorate, Str.pov. no. 1943-2, 28.IV.1992., Main HQ SRK, Order.

137. Order no. 2-77, personnel superintendent SSNO, 22.IV.1992.

138. SRK, HQ Territorial defence, Str.pov. no. 303/92, 7.V.1992, Zn. HQT D W. Slavonia, Order.

against Croatia was first and foremost a territorial war directed entirely against the Croat nation. The destruction of the Croat village of Ravno in eastern Herzegovina confirmed that the war was aimed at Croats, regardless of their citizenship. The ultimate goal of the war can be summed up in three words: ethnically cleansed territory. The use of all available means was permitted to achieve this goal.

The first phase of the direct conflict lasted from the middle of August, 1990 until the beginning of March, 1991. During this period, the JNA forces added oil to the flames of rebellion, which were blazing in expectation of the second phase. General Kadijevic defined the role of the JNA as the protection of Serbs in Croatia from attacks by Croatian armed forces, and to allow them to consolidate military organisation for the purpose of defence; at the same time prepare the JNA for a war with Croatia once it attacks the JNA.<sup>140</sup> General Kadijevic was distorting the truth. It was not a case of Serbs being attacked but, rather, an armed rebellion of their militant elements against the legitimate government of the Republic of Croatia; the JNA's intervention tightened the area onto which they desired to expand in the spring of 1991, to the detriment of ethnically mixed regions.

The second phase lasted from the beginning of March until the beginning of July 1991. During this period, the Serb terrorists attempted to expand their illegal republic to areas in which they did not have favourable status, although their numbers were sufficient enough to lay claim to yet another ancient plot of Serb land. Units of the JNA from this moment on became an overt guardian and then participant in the same mission. Next were Pakrac, Plitvice, and Slavonia. There was a limited number of victims in these initial, low-level confrontations. The federal army benefited from the experiences of the 52nd corps in Kosovo. Specifically, they demonstrated their force by the continual movement of armoured and mechanised units and low flying fighter planes, which was in clear contrast to the poorly armed Croatian light infantry units. The tactical leaders were the armoured and mechanised brigades located in Croatian territory (4th armoured, 12th and 265th mechanised brigades) as well as units from other areas: Banja Luka (329th armoured brigade), Pančevo (51st mechanised brigade), Subotica (36th mechanised brigade), and Sremska Mitrovica (453rd mechanised brigade). General Kadijevic justified these tactics candidly: In order to execute the given instructions, units of the JNA in and around Croatia must be reinforced. They must have two types of formations. A large number of armoured and mechanised units from platoon to battalion

139. SSNO, JCS AF SFRY, Operations centre, No. 53-3, 11.V.1992, Command 5th, 10th, 13th and 17th corps and 4th md, Order.

140. V. KADIJEVIC, My view of the break-up, p.127.

strength should be positioned near the conflict areas so that they can intervene quickly. An adequate number of armoured and mechanised units, brigade size or larger, should be positioned at suitable checkpoints in and around Croatia so that they may be engaged in enhanced operations.<sup>141</sup> As was the case in the first phase of the JNAs activities, General Kadijevic distorted the truth in the second phase as well. Preparations for the use of armoured and mechanised units began one year earlier, based on an order of May 15, 1990, with the reclassification and reorganisation of units in and around Croatia into A type, and establishment of the 10th corps in Zagreb.<sup>142</sup> It is crucial that this order was given one day after the order to confiscate the weapons of the territorial defence. The ethnic cleansing, carried out by local Serbs, began during this phase. Units of the territorial defence, as they referred to themselves, carried out their assignments with threats and physical intimidation, followed by a more effective formula: massacring all those who were deemed unsuitable. Blatant genocide proved to be the most effective means for Serbs to reach their goal of ethnically cleansing the areas of Croat and other non-Serb populations. The formula was suitable for the army as well, which presented itself as a neutral factor whose basic assignment was to create buffer zones. The army was omnipresent when the success of the terrorists (Dvor na Uni) needed bolstering, and when the advances of regular Croat forces, should they prove detrimental for the rebel Serbs (Pakrac, Plitvice) had to be stopped.

The beginning of July marked the start of the JNAs third phase of aggression against Croatia: segmented and ever-increasing engagement in support of the rebel and volunteer Serb units, and participation in their activities to such an extent that in September, the JNA had become the main strategist. The četniks and other paramilitary units were discarded as it became clear that they could not make progress against the Croatian forces. This was especially clear in eastern Slavonia, where the JNA seized the borders of the Republic of Croatia with armoured and mechanised units. This was an offensive intended to intimidate Croatia as well

141. V. KADIJEVIC, *My view of the break-up*, p.127.

142. Of the four corpuses whose command was located in Croatia (9th, 10th, 13th and 32nd) only two (13th and 32nd) had the bulk of its troops located in areas with a Croat majority. Even though the 10th corps was situated in Zagreb, the majority of its units were located in regions with a large Serb population. The 9th Knin corps was given the optimal transfer with the exception of units in Sinj, the remainder was located in Serb dominated areas. It is therefore no wonder that this corps was considered most successful during the war against Croatia 1991/92. If one links the zones of responsibility of the 9th corps, 10th corps and the 17th corps of the 1st military district it becomes clear that they approximate the boundary Virovitica-Karlovac-Karlobag, which is the renowned western border of the proponents of a great Serbia.<sup>143</sup> *Domino strategy, The Peoples Army*, 2.X.1991.

as an important operative procedure that resulted in control by the JNA of bridges on the Danube, which was a great advantage in the further waging of war. From these administrative borders the JNA moved forward step-by-step, assisting the local Serb units and various Serb partisan expansionist units. In this manner, Baranja and several Croatian villages in eastern Slavonia west of the Danube (Dalj, Aljmaš and Erdut) were seized. In other parts of Croatia the peacekeeping role of the JNA was becoming intolerable, forcing the Croatian leadership to blockade JNA units wherever possible. In cities with a Croat majority, roads were blocked, which was significant for the armoured and mechanised units. The arrival of new recruits from Croatia and Slovenia had come to a complete halt, and there was also a significant reduction from other parts of Yugoslavia. The unsuccessful mobilisation of reserves at that time was another factor working to the JNAs disadvantage.

From the end of September and beginning of October, an offensive began whose objective was to withdraw units from the hinterlands and areas that were not envisioned for a greater Serbia, and to penetrate the artificial borders. The poor showing of reserves condemned the plan to failure and forced the implementation of a new plan. The explanation given to the public by the defence minister of Serbia, Lieutenant General Tomislav Simovic, conflicted with the activities underway: combat activitiesÉ allowing for the evacuation of personnel, material, and technical equipment from the surrounded garrisons in Croatia, and foremost, preventing the genocide of Serb inhabitants living in that republic by paramilitary units.<sup>143</sup> The smokescreen, preventing an ethnic conflict, was exposed, and the JNAs position became clear. The pretext of fighting to free barricaded garrisons in Dubrovnik and Vukovar was nonsense, since, as Lord Carrington stated, there were in these cities no barricaded garrisons or Serb inhabitants who must be protected.<sup>144</sup> From an operative standpoint, the offensives on these cities were incomprehensible. Such an offensive is a very complex and sensitive operation, and battles for cities are generally avoided; cities are bypassed and blocked by smaller units. This is particularly true if the attackers main strength lies in armoured and mechanised units, whose manoeuvrability is drastically reduced in city battles. The armoured and mechanised divisions of the 12th corps and 1st proletarian mechanised division corps lacked sufficient infantry to escort their tanks. Logically, Vukovar should have been bypassed and blocked by small forces. However, this was not the case. Dubrovnik is even stranger. It would have been logical for

143. Domino strategy, The Peoples Army, 2.X.1991., p.10.

144. Henry WYNAENDTS, At odds, Yugoslav chronicle, 07/91-08/92, Belgrade 1996., p.99.

the forces of the 2nd Podgorica corps and the 37th Užice corps to be dispatched through western Herzegovina towards Split. This was again not the case; the city was attacked. As with Vukovar, there is no military explanation. The reasoning behind the attacks on these cities must apparently be sought elsewhere; perhaps in the mentality that had for centuries advocated the right to neighbouring lands. In 1991, the balance of power was so favourable for the Serbs that it would be senseless to draw a comparison. Several thousand tanks confronted a few combat vehicles of the Croatian police and hand-fashioned armoured vehicles. This balance of power promised the fulfilment of the centuries-long dream of a great Serbia. In September 1991, when all this steel machinery fired up, its navigators did not intend to leave uncleansed territory behind. The objective was to ethnically cleanse everything and everyone that was non-Serb, and to eradicate any memory of these people. This was the logic behind the attacks on cities and use of genocide to reach the main goal. This was also the JNAs reason for waging war on Dubrovnik and Vukovar.<sup>145</sup>

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145. At the beginning of the eighties the Serbs followed the same path as most institutions and government bodies in Yugoslavia where they were the majority. From a super-national Yugoslav institution it transformed itself into the strong hand of aggressive and chauvinistic Serb expansionism ten years later. In the war that Serbia waged against Croatia in 1991-92, the JNA nearsightedly and unsuccessfully attempted to engage all of Serbia and Montenegro. Confirming their nearsightedness was the statement made by General Jevrem Cokic regarding the use of Montenegrin police for securing the Dubrovnik background, and the complaint by commander of the 1st proletarian mechanized division corps General Dragoljub Arandelovic to reporters of The Peoples Army at the beginning of October 1991 when he stated that the statement made by an official of the Serbian government regarding the substitution of recruits for obligatory military service after 45 days proved to be quite problematic. I find that statement to be nearsighted because it directly affects the combat readiness of the units in a negative manner. It concerns troops which have overcome initial weaknesses that are normal considering the radical change they experienced in their way of life and were placed directly into a combat situation where their life is in danger, and now have some combat experience; we now must send them home and take in inexperienced troops which have to experience what I have just mentioned from the beginning. If it were not for this decision the units would, considering the firepower and already mentioned experience, achieve greater results. The truth has overcome all barriers, The Peoples Army, 9.I.92, p.14; As once before under the war flag, The Peoples Army, 2.X.91., p.4.

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After the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia entered the crisis-ridden eighties. They were marked by the Kosovo crises in 1981 and 1989, the long standing economic crises, and the rise of great Serbian nationalism directed against the federal state as conceived and confirmed in the 1974 Constitution Ð a phenomenon which triggered a reaction from the non-Serb peoples. The active participation of the JNA made it clear that the Serb expansionism had also engulfed this institution, which had a Serb majority and had for years promoted itself as the last defender of Titos legacy. At the end of the eighties, the reorganisation of the armed forces of SFRY was complete according to the Unity plan, which called for extreme decentralisation. The organisational changes weakened the territorial defence, which contained elements of a republic army, and strengthened the other component, the Yugoslav peoples army. The military elite thus openly sided with Serbia and Montenegro, which unlike the other republics promoted the centralisation of Yugoslavia. The only foundation for such reorganisation would have been a serious threat from outside, which was an absurd assumption at the end of the Cold War.

After the triumph of democracy in Croatia, the JNA disarmed the Croatian territorial defence prior to the change in leadership. Simultaneously, it reorganised its forces in the greater Zagreb area and began forming the 10th corps, whose assignment was to pacify the city using methods from the Kosovo battles in the eighties. Armoured and mechanised units positioned in and around Croatia reinforced the peacetime structure of the army, which was particularly important in regions where Croats were in the majority. Dependence on troops was thus reduced, since these types of units, with their firepower and mobility, were envisioned as the leading force during the conflict in Croatia.

After the rebellion of the Serb minority in Croatia in August 1990, the JNA immediately took their side. Until July 1991 it operated through the buffer zone institution, allegedly separating the conflicting parties; in reality its assignment was to prevent the legally elected Croatian institutions from upholding constitutionally defined order throughout the country. From July 1991 the federal army supported the rebels by use of force against the Croatian armed units. At the end of September, a massive strategic offensive was launched against Croatia in order to divide the country, force surrender, and seize areas which were part of the Serbian expansionist program. After unsuccessful operations, the JNA satisfied itself with areas predominantly inhabited by Serbs, and at the beginning of 1992 it proceeded to organise the rebel Serb army prior to withdrawal from the area.

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