

MIROSLAV TUĐMAN IN DEFENSE OF CROATIAN TRUTH

Kuzma Kovačić*

I believe that all of us who share a common collective experience in the creation of a sovereign Croatian state and participation in the Homeland War, can all agree on this: we love Croatia, even today when we don't particularly like it, and we loathe what is being done in its name. We are older than the independent Croatian state, and we have witnessed its bloody birth; that is exactly why we will not allow ourselves to be deprived of our collective memory. Our

* Kuzma Kovačić, a Croatian sculptor, was born in Hvar on June 6, 1952. He graduated in sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 1976. He has exhibited his works hundreds of times in individual and group exhibitions. His works can be found in Croatian museums and galleries, as well as in foreign collections. He is the author of hundreds of public, monumental and sacral sculptural works, as well as commemorative Croatian coins - kuna and linden, of which we mention the Altar of the Croatian Homeland, Monument to Pope John Paul II, Monuments to Franjo Tuđman, Monument to Gojko Šušak, Monument to Antun pl. Mihanović, Monument to Croatian Freedom, Gates of Hvar Cathedral, Altar of Hvar Cathedral, The Last Supper, Statue of Blessed Alojzije Stepinac, Relief of the Eternal Celebration, Sv. John Paul II (relief) and Relief of Croatian Martyrs. He has won numerous professional, national and international awards, as well as three Croatian state medals awarded by President Franjo Tuđman. He is a full professor of sculpture at the Academy of Arts of the University of Split. Since 2020, he has been a full member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

collective memory is neither an historical nor a social construction, but an original, unadulterated communal and personal experience of national identity – e.g. the source and origin of modern Croatia.

Miroslav Tuđman: Programirane hereze i hrvatski otpori, UHIP, Zagreb, 2013. (Programmed Heresies and Croatian Resistances)

(...) after the reception on Ban Jelačić Square, the generals did not go directly to Pantovčak, but to the Cathedral.

Miroslav Tuđman (ibid)

Prof. Dr. Miroslav Tuđman, a noble, truth-loving man with a big heart and expansive knowledge, is a Croatian great to whom our people owe lasting gratitude and true respect. both for deeds known and unknown, first in the Homeland War, and then in defense of Croatian truth and those who defended Croatia. Many of his contributions will remain unknown, due to the nature of his work, but those that are known, such as his determined commitment to justice in the Hague tribunal for the indicted Croats and his actions in other important and crucial political issues for Croatia, are so great that we can truly say that Miroslav Tuđman was the only authentic Croatian statesman after his father, although he did not formally hold such a position. For those who have held these positions, "it would have been better if they had not even been born"; however, we are obliged to share with the world and future Croatian generations the light of truth and the many great accomplishments of Miroslav Tuđman.

I vividly remember that touching moment when, in the midst of de-Tuđmanization and attempts to crush Croatia, the first Holy Mass for the late President Tuđman at the

Shrine of the Holy Mother of Freedom in Zagreb was held. And when, in my desire to please him and provide encouragement, I shared my perception of the event – that the church, by holding the mass and standing in defense of the honor and deeds of the founders of the Croatian state, had already destroyed de-Tuđmanization, he smiled, accepting, I believe, that my claim might have merit. Of course, a great and difficult struggle still lay ahead for him, which he fought tirelessly and ultimately won through the written word and his irrefutable arguments testifying to his love for the homeland.

I have fond memories of Miroslav Tuđman, our cordial friendship, and our collaboration in crucial and irreplaceable actions he undertook for Croatia, actions that stopped the stagnation of Croatian state policy after the death of President Tuđman and which largely returned Croatia from the path it had taken after 2000. After I saw his commitment to the good of the Croatian people and state in his defense of Croatian truth about the Homeland War, which he confirmed by his valuable participation in the defense against Serbian aggression, I joined his efforts after our very first conversation. I wanted to contribute what I could by sculpting and testifying in public and through the written word. I mention these events because they have characterized our collaboration over the past two decades.

We met, as far as I remember, on several occasions in the 1990s, during the war and post-war period, but our first close encounter was at the opening of my exhibition at the Forum Gallery in Zagreb in 2000, an exhibition dedicated to the late President Tuđman and our defenders. I invited the Tuđman family to the opening, and they attended, bringing honor to the exhibition. We then agreed to cooperate in resisting the announced process of de-Tuđmanization with the assumption to power of the unfortunate coalition and Stjepan Mesic as President of Croatia. Mesic had already "dismantled" by an arbitrary decision the Altar of the Croatian

Homeland in Medvedgrad, and Miroslav Tuđman had resigned from his position after realizing what lay ahead.

Miroslav, the most knowledgeable man in regard to all the privileged information and events surrounding the creation and defense of the state, took on the difficult task of defending Croatian truth at that crucial time for Croatia. His contribution cannot be equaled by anyone else who had held this position. At that time, no assistance was forthcoming from the party founded by President Tuđman, which was taken over by Ivo Sanader after vote-stealing at the Electoral Parliament (I was there and personally saw this). In fact, he was forced to fight the same battle against the then HDZ leadership.

Nonetheless, in 2001 the first monument to Dr. Franjo Tuđman was erected in Škabrnja, Croatia, initiated by the HDZ; the gesture was needed for its political survival. My proposal won the open competition. The unveiling ceremony of the monument, at which Miroslav Tuđman spoke and in which we participated together, was a healing event - but not without a certain sadness, given that the situation in the Croatian Democratic Union at the time was well known. Similarities to that particular period extend to the present day. Miroslav Tuđman then organized the most important form of resistance to the fabrications being leveled at Croatia: public testimonies in the form of rallies, symposia, debates. At the invitation of Miroslav Tuđman, I participated in these gatherings, which were organized by the Association for the Promotion of Croatian Identity and Prosperity (UHIP).

This resulted in a series of anthologies that provided answers to important Croatian questions (the statue of the monument in Škabrnja appears on its cover): Dr. Franjo Tuđman - visions and achievements, 2002, Zagreb (Creation of characteristics and signs, memorial signs and monuments-symbols), Dr. Franjo Tuđman - Unforgiven Victory, 2003, Zagreb ("Tuđman's work is a great

contribution to the realization of human rights of small nations"), Globalization and identity - discussions on globalization, identity and culture of politics, 2004, Zagreb ("On the Christian faith contained in art work "), Croatian National Interests and the EU, 2006, Zagreb (" Only Croatia in the Community of Sovereign and Free European States and Peoples"), Croatia and the Western Balkans - Discussions on Sovereignty, National Identity and Foreign Policy, 2007, Zagreb ("We Can't Suffer Anymore"), Information War against the liberation action, Operation Storm - Debates on the Doctrine of Information Warfare, Hague Indictment Screenwriters and Croatian Identity, 2008, Zagreb ("Silence - Organized Crime against Croatia"); Memory and modernity - a discussion of the past, present and future of Croatia, 2011, Zagreb ("On the issue of memory in contemporary Croatian art"). (My attachments are given in parentheses, in confirmation of the authenticity of this testimony).

Faithful associates and admirers of President Tuđman, associates of Prof.Dr. Miroslav Tuđman and Admiral Davor Domazet Lošo (several witnesses with different views on the events during the creation and defense of the state were also called) - politicians, generals, writers, artists, scientists, businessmen, journalists, publicists and other witnesses of crucial events since 1990 to 1999 and beyond. All these years I followed and supported the efforts of Miroslav Tuđman to revive the spirit of Croatia and a committed patriotism in Croatian society (in matters and in areas where I could best contribute) and wholeheartedly supported his candidacy for Croatian president and his newly-formed Croatian True Revival party.

The second of the three monuments I created in honor of President Tuđman was erected in his hometown of Veliki Trgovišće, again with the assistance of the HDZ (then led by Tomislav Karamarko). The Tuđman family attended the unveiling, so we were happy to meet once again. Our

friendly connection was realized in other cordial meetings, in Zagreb, Split, Veliki Trgovišće, and other places and occasions, and in especially in nice island ambiances such as Selce on Brač and in Hvar. Particularly touching was the meeting in my studio in Kučine (Solin), at the foot of Mosor, as I was designing the Zagreb monument to President Tuđman. I invited Miroslav to see the statue in clay, and to consult while the statue was still being formed. I had shown him a sketch-study for the monument and we agreed on some possible minor changes.

This time there was no talk whatsoever about matters of the sculpture. I saw that he was pleased and happy that the monument would finally be erected in Zagreb, as a state act of recognition and gratitude to its founder. At the unveiling of the monument on December 10, 2019, on the 20th anniversary of the death of President Franjo Tuđman, the statesmen and academic, we gathered happily together again, as well as at the presentation of a book about the monument by Ivan Aralica, Ivan Rogic and Milan Beslic, with photographs by Goran Vranić, organized a year later at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

This monument symbolized the last nail in the coffin of the forever-failed Yugoslavia. I believe that our cooperation has borne good fruit and I am honored to have been able to make a small contribution to the efforts of Miroslav Tuđman in his fight for the truth, a cause to which he was devoted until the end of his earthly existence. We agreed at the end of last year to meet and spend time together in Zagreb.

Then came the news about Miro's illness. His wife informed us about it, and said he had asked her to answer our Christmas card before he entered the hospital. We spoke briefly on the phone while he was in the hospital, and we were all hoping and praying for his recovery. I still cannot accept the sad truth that he left us so suddenly and too soon,

and I mourn deeply for my friend, who was a role model in many ways.

I dreamt that he was alive, together with us in joy, like an encounter in Eternal Life. He is there, I firmly believe, because he was a man of Love.

Hvar, May 14, 2021