

Teaching War

**How Croatian schoolbooks changed
and why it matters**

Textbook series – part one



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“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”
(William Faulkner)

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SUMMARY

Nationalists around the world see the role of history in terms of awakening emotions of loyalty. They are particularly concerned that the young are taught to love their nation and to know its enemies. The point of teaching wartime history in school is to instil patriotism, and to convey that in a dangerous world the survival of any nation depends on its ability to win its battles. Nationalists do not accept the view that in a democracy a historian's role is to challenge cherished myths; and that in an open society history education should prepare students for citizenship in a world where all institutions are imperfect – a world where, unnervingly, even those we admire may be responsible for crimes.

This report describes how the clash between different approaches to history education has played out in Croatian history textbooks. Until 2000, there was only one nationalist textbook in use, presenting a one-sided image of Croatia's war history, both in the Second World War and in the conflicts that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia. By 2013, when Croatia acceded to the EU, teachers could choose between four textbooks, which offered a much more nuanced picture. This reflected wider changes in how Croats viewed themselves, how they defined citizenship and how they saw their relationship with their neighbours and their Orthodox Serb minority.

Today, textbook authors across the Balkans face the challenge of explaining wars and war crimes, fascism, communism, ethnic cleansing and systematic violations of human rights in their recent past. Some Balkan countries still use textbooks telling stories of a nation surrounded by enemies, with national heroes and foreign villains, periods of suffering and victimhood alternating with military triumphs. Such textbooks transmit distorted ideas of citizenship; and signal to adults the limits of a nation's commitment to human rights and fundamental values, in peace time and in war.

Croatia's progress in coming to terms with its recent history and providing a more balanced account in its textbooks is therefore extremely important. It compares favourably to the record of both Britain and the US, which took many decades to face up to the complex moral legacy of the Second World War. As the British daily *The Independent* wrote in 2004, advocating an official apology for the carpet bombing of Dresden at the end of the Second World War: "Is it really so hard to understand that you can support a war while objecting to some of the individual war crimes committed during the course of the fighting?" In fact, it *is* surprisingly hard, even for established democracies such as the United Kingdom or the United States – hard, but essential if war crimes are to become less common in the future.

How schools teach about wars and about issues such as the bombing of civilians, war crimes or ethnic cleansing sends a signal that goes far beyond the classroom. Modern humanitarian law is equally binding on countries fighting and winning wars of self-defence, as it is on aggressors. A willingness to condemn violations of the laws of war in history textbooks is thus also a litmus test of a country's commitment to international norms.

The debate on how to teach recent history never ends. If Croatian textbooks have changed fast in the past few years, they will change more; the question is not *whether* but *how*. Even today, they are under challenge from nationalists. The way these debates play out will have huge significance for Croatia's democracy and its position in the region.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Three presidents



Franjo Tudjman
(1990-1999)



Stipe Mesic
(2000-2010)



Ivo Josipovic
(2010-2015)

Two prime ministers



Ivica Racan
(2000-2003)



Ivo Sanader
(2003-2009)

Two generals

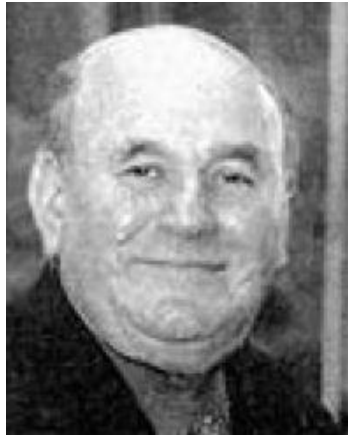


Mirko Norac
(sentenced 2003 & 2008)



Ante Gotovina
(acquitted 2012)

Croatia's textbook battles



Ivo Peric



Agneza Szabo



Kresimir Erdelja



Mario Jareb



Snjezana Koren

1990s

Ivo Peric:

Agneza Szabo:

Tudjman's textbook author
Tudjman's curriculum expert

2013

Kresimir Erdelja:

Mario Jareb:

Snjezana Koren:

Co-author of history textbook I
Co-author of history textbook II
Author of history textbook III

I. ADULT HISTORY

In 1961 Michael Howard, a British military historian, gave a lecture on the use and abuse of military history. He noted that historians have been expected “almost since history began” to create “an image of the past, through careful selection and interpretation, in order to create or sustain certain emotions or beliefs.” He invited his audience to think of a military historian telling the story of his regiment:

“Without any sense of ill-doing he will emphasize the glorious episodes of its history and will pass with a light hand over its murkier passages ... to serve a practical purpose in sustaining regimental morale in the future.”¹

However, Howard noted, romantic stories of past wars may leave a soldier “dangerously unprepared for cowardice and muddle and horror, when he actually encounters them, unprepared even for the cumulative attrition of dirt and fatigue.” History as myth is like tales told to children, “nursery history,” leaving people unprepared for the realities of life. Mature societies need a different history and a historian’s role is to challenge cherished myths:

“Such disillusion is a necessary part of growing up in and *belonging to an adult society*; and a good definition of the difference between a Western liberal society and a totalitarian one – whether it be Communist, Fascist, or Catholic authoritarians – is that in the former the government treats its citizens as responsible adults and in the latter it cannot.”²

Nationalists around the world see the role of history in terms similar to Howard’s regimental historian: it has to awaken emotions of patriotism and loyalty. To achieve this, they present national history as the unfolding of a divine purpose; less savoury episodes are made to appear inevitable, diminished, or disappear altogether.

Nationalists are particularly concerned with the teaching of history in school, where the young must be taught to love their nation and respect their leadership. If the young believe what they are taught, then the values embedded in textbook histories will shape their lives, and thus their country’s future. One group of intellectuals, which called itself the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, put it this way in the 1980s: young Japanese ought to be protected from “dark history”, or they will be left “confused and no longer proud of their nation.” Leaders like Japan’s prime minister Shinzo Abe or Russia’s president Vladimir Putin see a political imperative in protecting the young from confusion. As Putin told Russian teachers at a conference on teaching history in Moscow in 2007: “We cannot allow ourselves to be saddled with guilt.”³

History textbooks also teach the young about friends and enemies. In primary schools, Greek children learn about “secret Greek schools” in the Ottoman Empire where young children learned Greek and about their religion, in defiance of Turkish oppression. This is taught through a nursery rhyme about such schools, a discussion of a painting by a 19th century Greek painter (“The Secret School”) and possibly an excursion to a famous wax museum in Ioannina, which shows life in a secret school. A secret school even made it onto a Drachma bill. Greek historians

¹ Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars*, 2nd edition, Harvard Univ. Press, 1983, p. 189.

² Reprinted in: Michael Howard, *ibid.*, p. 190. Emphasis added.

³ Quoted in David Brandenberger, [“A New Short Course? A. V. Filippov and the Russian State’s Search for a ‘Useable Past’”](#), in: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, No. 10/4 (Fall 2009), p. 829.

know that such schools never existed.⁴ But when a history textbook clarified this, it was burned by supporters of Golden Dawn, the Greek fascist party, in Constitution Square in the centre of Athens in March 2007. The book in question was only used for one year and then withdrawn, following a massive mobilisation led by the Orthodox Church.⁵ Antonis Samaras, then a European parliamentarian and later Greek prime minister (2012-2015), defended the withdrawal of the book, arguing that the point of teaching history in school was the “development of the national consciousness” of Greeks.⁶ For those who think like him, history textbooks are weapons of mass instruction in the battle to define national identity.

The alternative view is that the young should learn adult history; that history textbooks in an open society should prepare students for citizenship in a world where values clash and where all institutions are imperfect – a world where, unnervingly, even those we admire may be responsible for crimes.

This report describes how the clash between nationalist and “adult” history has played out in Croatian history textbooks. Until 2000, there was only one textbook in use. It was avowedly nationalist in outlook, presenting a one-sided image of Croatia’s war history, both in the Second World War and in the conflicts that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia. By 2013, when Croatia acceded to the EU, teachers could choose between four history textbooks, which offered a much more nuanced picture. These differences reflected wider changes in how Croats viewed themselves, how they defined Croatian citizenship and how they saw their relationship with their neighbours.

But the debate on how to teach recent history never ends. If Croatian textbooks have changed fast in the past few years, they will change more, and the question is not *whether* but *how*. Even today, they are under challenge from nationalists who cherish the vision of history of Franjo Tudjman, the father of Croatia’s independence. The way these debates play out will have huge significance for Croatia’s democracy and its position in the region. Will Croatia’s future leaders follow in the path of Putin’s Russia, where textbooks have been revised to give a distorted picture of the 20th century? Will Croatia find itself in endless textbook wars, like Japan and its East Asian neighbours? Or will it look to Germany, where a sustained campaign to come to terms with a complicated past has been key to building previously unimaginable levels of trust among neighbours? In this case Croatia could become an inspiration for a Balkan region that comes to terms with recent history.

The protagonists in these battles are not generals, but the authors who write textbooks. And the heroes in this tale are teachers and historians who are convinced, as Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan once put it, that “examining the past honestly, whether that is painful for

⁴ When Byzantium was conquered by the Ottomans in 1453 the Sultan bestowed the title of milletbasi (leader of the community) upon Gennadios, the first-post Byzantine orthodox patriarch. Until the end of the Ottoman Empire the patriarch had the privilege of using Greek as an official language in his communications with the Sublime Porte and was formally a member of the Sultan’s bureaucracy. There were countless Greek schools and by the late 1860s, Christians formed the majority of the Ottoman Empire’s diplomatic corps. Alexander Karatheorodis (1833-1906) was Ottoman ambassador to Rome, undersecretary at the Ottoman ministry of foreign affairs, foreign minister in 1878 and the first Christian governor of Crete in 1895. Constantine Mousouros defended the Ottoman position as ambassador in Athens (1840-1848), before becoming for thirty years Ottoman ambassador to London.

⁵ Jurgen Broeders, “*The Greeks fought heroically*”. *A history of Greek history textbooks*, Radbound University Nijmegen, 2008, pp. 9f. See also: Maria Repoussi, “[Battles over the national past of Greeks. The Greek History Textbook Controversy 2006-2007](#)”, *Geschichte für heute. Zeitschrift für historisch-politische Bildung*, 1/2009.

⁶ Antonis Samaras, then a member of the European Parliament, in an article published in Metexelixa in 2007, republished [on the blog Antivaro](#).

some people or not, is the only way for societies to become mature and to build bridges to others.”⁷

II. WARRIORS

For anybody interested in the past, strolling through European capitals offers a refresher course in military history.

Take London: You start your walk on Trafalgar Square, named after the naval battle of 1805. In the middle is Nelson’s Column, honouring the admiral who defeated the Napoleonic fleet. A little further, across the river, is Waterloo Station, and opposite it Wellington Hotel, named after the commander at the battle of Waterloo. Lord Wellington can be found high on a horse near Bank Junction, made of bronze from French cannons. His ally on the battlefield, Prussian field marshal Blucher, is found, cast in iron, in Windsor Castle. Blucher also has his square and three streets in his honour in Berlin. There you find, a stone’s throw from Blucherstrasse in Kreuzberg, a street named after his chief of staff (Gneisenau), leading to a street named after Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg, the Prussian field marshal who crowned his career with the storming of Paris.

Paris offers a similar parade of triumphs past. You arrive at Gare d’Austerlitz, named after the battle where Napoleon defeated a much larger Austro-Russian army. Ahead is the Quai d’Austerlitz. Traverse the Seine over the Pont d’Austerlitz to find Rue d’Austerlitz, a few steps from Avenue Daumesnil, named after one of Napoleon’s generals. You soon discover that every general in Napoleon’s army who did not quarrel with the emperor has a street named after him. These include names even historically educated Parisians have forgotten: Louis Alexandre Berthier, Jean-Baptiste Bessieres, Guillaume Marie Anne Brune, Louis-Nicolas Davout and a dozen others. Twenty-first century Paris is surrounded by the ring of the Boulevards des Marechaux (Boulevards of the Marshalls), as if Napoleon’s generals still guard their capital against foreign invaders.

Napoleon himself lies under a huge golden dome. Few of the school classes brought to visit his tomb ask whether he was a political visionary or an autocratic madman, or whether his generals took part in criminal wars of aggression. Whether it was 3.5 million or 5 million people who died as a result of his campaigns is a question left to historians.⁸ When a French philosopher argued in 2005 that it was Napoleon who first used gas chambers as a method of execution, during the Haitian Revolution, he triggered only a cursory debate.⁹

It is a historical fact that Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo. Much else is a matter of interpretation. As a British commentator noted recently, it is not easy to make up one’s mind on Napoleon even 200 years after his defeat: “Was he a revolutionary tribune, a tyrant who reintroduced slavery, or simply a phenomenal leader? The truth is that he was all of these things.”¹⁰ In France today there are still debates as to whether Robespierre’s revolutionary

⁷ Margaret MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, Profile Books, 2009, p. 136.

⁸ The historian Adam Zamoyski estimated that around 400,000 Russian soldiers and an equal number of civilians died in the 1812 campaign alone.

⁹ Claude Ribbe, *Le Crime de Napoleon*, Ed. Privé, 2005.

¹⁰ Martin Kettle, “[Napoleon’s dream died at Waterloo – and so did that of British democrats](#)”, *Guardian*, 17 June 2015.

terror during the French revolution was a criminal monstrosity or a necessary expedient. In 2011, a proposal to name a street after him was eventually rejected.¹¹

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that recent military history is a subject of particular passion. Croatia, which joined the European Union in 2013, is the EU member with the most recent experience of war on its own territory; a war that ended 20 years ago and which Croats refer to as their “Homeland War” (*Domovinski rat*).

Across Croatian society, there is consensus that Croatia in 1991 was a victim of armed aggression, with the right and obligation to defend itself. There was relief across the political spectrum when, in 2012, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) ruled that Operation Storm – the military campaign in 1995 in which Croatian forces defeated the Serb separatists who had occupied a large part of their country – was not a criminal conspiracy to expel Serbs from Croatia.¹² Yet some 200,000 civilians did indeed flee their homes during this campaign.¹³ And crimes and murders did happen, described in detail on more than 750 pages in a first-instance verdict.¹⁴ How to teach this story in Croatian schools is one of many burning issues facing the writers of history textbooks, in a nation where many of the participants in recent battles, unlike Napoleon and his generals, remain alive. It is a challenge that Croatian textbook authors share with their counterparts across the Balkans.

III. A HISTORIAN AT WAR

From 1990 to 1999, Croatian politics was dominated by a warrior historian obsessed with the modern history of his nation.

Franjo Tuđman was born in May 1922 in a small village in Northern Croatia in what was then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (in 1929 renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). In 1941, Hitler’s Germany invaded Yugoslavia and established a puppet state – the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). It was run by the Ustasha, created in 1930 as a terrorist group fighting for a “racially pure” Greater Croatia. Tuđman and his brother joined the communist Partisans to fight the German invaders and the Ustasha regime. Tuđman’s brother was killed.

Following the defeat of fascism and the creation of socialist Yugoslavia, Tuđman moved to Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia. He rose through the ranks to the position of general in the Yugoslav Army in 1960 at the young age of 38. His first book was on partisan warfare, drawing

¹¹ A popular French history website – [Histoire Pour Tous](#) – presents Robespierre as a historical personality “who still provokes debate”.

¹² ICTY, [Prosecutor vs Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac – Appeals Chamber Judgement](#), 16 November 2012.

¹³ Human Rights Watch and the ICTY put the number of Serbs who fled during and after Operation Storm at 200,000, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights at 180,000. The Serbian Documentation Information Centre Veritas refers to “more than 220,000” (including 30,000 soldiers), while Croatian authorities claim the figure was 150,000. For Human Rights Watch see [“Croatia: Impunity for Abuses Committed during ‘Operation Storm’ and the Denial of the Right of Refugees to return to the Krajina”](#), August 1996. For Veritas see its website [“Mape pravaca kretanja izbjegličkih kolona u akciji ‘Oluja’”](#). All other figures quoted in ICTY, [Prosecutor vs Ante Gotovina, Ivan Cermak and Mladen Markac – Trial Chamber Judgement, Vol. 2](#), 15 April 2011, §1712.

¹⁴ ICTY, [Prosecutor vs Ante Gotovina, Ivan Cermak and Mladen Markac – Trial Chamber Judgement, Vol. 2](#), 15 April 2011, pp. 912f. (murder), pp. 928f. (wanton destruction), p. 933 (plunder), pp. 935f. (inhumane acts and cruel treatment), p. 925 (deportation).

on his own experience. In 1961, he left the army, moved to Zagreb and became the founding director of the Institute for the History of Croatia's Workers' Movement.¹⁵

In the communist state, where the claims of the party to rule unopposed were based on its "scientific" understanding of historical necessity, historians played a role similar to religious scholars in theocracies. Military historians were even more important, as the victories in the Second World War were taken as ultimate proof that the future belonged to communism. Tudjman was certainly aware of this when his attention turned to the way the history of the Second World War was presented. Telling the story of the war was serious business.

In 1965, Tudjman sent a letter to the Central Committee of Croatia's Communist Party, questioning what he considered to be political manipulation of history. His focus was on the official death toll at Jasenovac, the largest camp run by the Ustasha regime. The (Yugoslav) Military Encyclopaedia put the number of Jasenovac victims at over 600,000.¹⁶ Referring to an unpublished 1964 census of war victims conducted by Yugoslav authorities,¹⁷ Tudjman argued that the total number of victims in all camps on the territory of current-day Croatia during the Second World War was less than 60,000. In one of his later books, Tudjman explained his motivation:

"I said: if they had killed only six people and not around 60,000 – as many people as perished in all the camps and prisons (according to statistical data of the Socialist Republic of Croatia) – it still would have been a terrible crime! So, who then needs to multiply the crime of Jasenovac and its Serbian victims by ten or twenty, or even thirty or fifty? Does the systematic magnification of the Jasenovac myth not serve the purpose of creating a black legend of the historic guilt of the entire Croatian people, for which it still has to atone?!"¹⁸

Tudjman was correct that Yugoslav communists had inflated the number of victims in Jasenovac. The Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC states today that "current estimates place the number of victims murdered by the Ustasha in Jasenovac during World War II between 77,000 and 97,000."¹⁹ The Jasenovac memorial site has a list with the names and details of 83,145 victims, and puts the estimated total figure at up to 100,000.²⁰

Why did Tudjman, who had fought the Ustasha, set out to "correct" the accounts of Ustasha crimes? As Croatian historian Ivo Goldstein later wrote, Tudjman's "historical texts were primarily those of a politician who wanted to adapt the interpretation of history to suit his political goals."²¹ Tudjman sought to challenge the association of "Croat" with Ustasha. However, by questioning the accuracy of figures provided by the Party, he challenged one of

¹⁵ Darko Hudelist, *Tudjman: Biografija*, Profil, 2004, pp. 271 and 303.

¹⁶ Quoted in Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: occupation and collaboration*, Stanford Univ. Press, 2001, pp. 724 and 726.

¹⁷ See Jozo Tomasevich, *ibid.*, p. 728.

¹⁸ Franjo Tudjman, *Bespuca povijesne zbiljnosti* (available in English translation as *Horrors of War*), Hrvatska sveucilisna naklada, 1994, p. 27.

¹⁹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "[Holocaust era in Croatia 1941-1945: Jasenovac](#)", online exhibition.

²⁰ Jasenovac Memorial Site, "[List of individual victims of Jasenovac concentration camp](#)" (March 2013) and "[Frequently asked questions](#)". In two studies published in the 1980s, Bogoljub Kocovic and Vladimir Zerjavic concluded independently of each other that approximately 83,000 people were killed in Jasenovac. Bogoljub Kocovic, *WWII Victims in Yugoslavia*, London, 1985; and Vladimir Zerjavic, *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga* (Obsession and Megalomania with Jasenovac and Bleiburg), Zagreb, 1992.

²¹ Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia. A History*, Hurst, 1999, p. 205.

the central pillars of Yugoslav communist ideology: its narrative of the Second World War. Before long, Tadjman was expelled from the Communist Party. He was also fired from the Institute for the History of Croatia's Workers' Movement, because of "nationalistic inclinations" in his work as a historian.²²

The usual way in which Yugoslav communism dealt with dissent was repression. According to figures of the Yugoslav regime itself, in 1949 there were more than 52,000 political prisoners.²³ The most notorious of prisons was on the barren Adriatic island of Goli otok (naked island) off the Croatian coast, where inmates were held, many without a trial, tortured and some 400 killed.²⁴ Political trials were common; everyone could see what happened to Tito's critics, such as Partisan fellow leader Milovan Djilas, who spent more than nine years in prison.²⁵ Tadjman, a communist general, could not have been surprised by what happened next.

In late 1971, Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia's leader, forced the entire Croatian communist party leadership to resign. More than 400 party officials were purged. Intellectuals and university students were arrested.²⁶ 427 people were convicted in 1972 in Croatia alone for "offences against the people and the state."²⁷ Amnesty International put the number of people sentenced in the whole of Yugoslavia for "offences against the people and the state," the principal category of political offences, at 3,778 between 1971 and 1978.²⁸ Tadjman himself was sentenced in 1972 to two years in jail. Amnesty International nominated him a prisoner of conscience.²⁹ He served nine months before returning to historical research. In the early 1980s, Tadjman was sentenced to another three years in prison for giving an interview to foreign media in which he criticised communist one-party rule as repressive.³⁰ At the time, the US Helsinki Watch Committee noted that:

"There are between 1,100 and 1,300 persons imprisoned in Yugoslavia for political offences, mainly 'verbal crimes' – more political prisoners than there are in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland taken together."³¹

Bitter about his experience, but as ambitious as ever, Tadjman toured North America during the late 1980s to garner support from the diaspora who had fled communism. He was now determined to use history to prepare a case for Croatian statehood and to reconcile the "sons and daughters of Ustasha" and the "sons and daughters of Partisans."³² His first stop in 1987 was Ontario, where he met Croatian nationalists such as John Zdunic. Zdunic, who would later lead the North America section of Tadjman's political party, recalled:

²² See OOSK IHRPH, "Odluka o kaznjavanju", 6 May 1967 (decision reached on 27 April), reprinted in Darko Hudelist, *Tudjman: Biografija*, Profil, 2004, p. 442.

²³ Amnesty International, [Yugoslavia. Prisoners of Conscience](#), 1985, p. 5.

²⁴ John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, p. 249. A Serbian historian has recently assembled the names of more than 16,000 former prisoners held in Goli otok. Marija Ristic, "[Yugoslav Post-WWII Jail Camp Prisoners Named](#)", *Balkan Insight*, 29 April 2014. The database can be access at: <http://goliotok.uimenaroda.net/>. Goli Otok was closed in 1989.

²⁵ *New York Times*, "[Milovan Djilas, Yugoslav Critic of Communism, Dies at 83](#)", 21 April 1995. Amnesty International, [Yugoslavia. Prisoners of Conscience](#), 1985, p. 6.

²⁶ Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia. A History*, Hurst, 1999, pp. 177-183.

²⁷ Amnesty International, [Yugoslavia. Prisoners of Conscience](#), 1985, p. 6.

²⁸ Amnesty International, *ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁹ Amnesty International, *ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰ Amnesty International, *ibid.*, p. 49.

³¹ US Helsinki Watch Committee, [Violations of the Helsinki Accords: Yugoslavia](#), November 1986, p. 1.

³² Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Cornell Univ. Press, 2003, p. 46.

“Everyone was tense because of who Tudjman was [a former communist general]. Before, these people couldn’t look one another in the eye. But Tudjman insisted that *we had all been fighting for the same cause, the Croatian cause, just in different ways.*”³³

Even as a Croatian nationalist, Tudjman’s communist past heavily influenced his views about history:

“Tudjman heralded both Lenin and Tito as great thinkers. But their real genius, he argued, had nothing to do with Marx, wage labor, or class struggle. Their brilliance lay in the recognition of national self-determination as the unstoppable dynamic of ‘history’s forward march.’”³⁴

In Canada, Tudjman also met Gojko Susak, a small entrepreneur living in Toronto who was born in a Croat-majority region in Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁵ Susak and Tudjman shared the belief that Croatia had a historical right to territories beyond its republican borders. For radical émigrés like Susak, Croatia proper extended to the river Drina in the East of Bosnia, as it had during the Second World War. Tudjman stated openly in 1989 that Croatia’s “historic and natural borders” exceeded those of contemporary (socialist) Croatia.³⁶ When the Croatian parliament adopted a new constitution, on 22 December 1990, Tudjman told the parliamentarians that Croatia “has many reasons to be dissatisfied with the existing borders.”³⁷ His closest aides explained later that Tudjman considered Croatia’s border with neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, where some 760,000 ethnic Croats lived in 1991, “historically absurd.”³⁸ In September 1991, after Tudjman made Gojko Susak his minister of defence, he was in a position to support those Croats who tried to carve out their own Croatian statelet in Bosnia and Herzegovina by force.

Map: The dream of a Greater Croatia – where would the borders be? (Map by ESI)



³³ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Cornell Univ. Press, 2003, p. 47. Emphasis added.

³⁴ Paul Hockenos, *ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁵ Paul Hockenos, *ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁶ Tudjman in interview to *Polet*, 27 October 1989, pp. 22-23.

³⁷ Portal tudjman.hr, “Govor u prigodi proglasenja Ustava Republike Hrvatske”, 22 December 1990.

³⁸ Hrvoje Sarinic, quoted in: Ivica Rados, *Tudjman izbliza*, Profil International, 2004, pp. 101f.

In May 1991, one year after Franjo Tudjman's election as president in the country's first free elections, Croatia declared its independence. Within two months, war broke out. Members of Croatia's Serb minority of 12 percent (1991 census), armed by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, seized control of large parts of the country.³⁹ Pro-Serb forces bombed Croatian cities, including Zagreb and Dubrovnik. The town of Vukovar in the East of the country was destroyed. Serb forces committed horrific crimes, such as the mass execution of some 260 prisoners of war and civilians who had taken refuge in a hospital following the fall of Vukovar. By the end of 1991, Serb forces occupied more than a quarter of Croatia. Some 200,000 people, Croats and other non-Serbs, were expelled from these areas.⁴⁰ In January 1992, a ceasefire agreement froze the frontlines, leaving Croatia partitioned.

Map: Areas controlled by Serb forces (1991-1995/1998)



Map of Croatia showing territories occupied by Serb separatists (1991-1995): Krajina (area south of Karlovac down to Knin), Western Slavonia (between Pakrac and Okučani) and Eastern Slavonia (around Vukovar). Source: Source: CC BY-SA 3.0

If the beginning of the war in Croatia took Europe by surprise, so did its end. In spring and summer of 1995, Croatia's army carried out two military operations – “Flash” and “Storm” – reconquering most Serb-held territory. The operations lasted for a mere three and four days, respectively. Nearly all Serbs residing in these areas – as many as 200,000 – fled the country.⁴¹ In late August 1995, Tudjman came to Knin, the self-proclaimed capital of rebel Serbs in the previous four years. There he declared that Croatian Serbs “disappeared from Knin and these lands as if they had never been here ... They did not even have the time to collect their dirty money, hard currency and underwear.”⁴²

³⁹ While most Croats are Catholic, most Serbs are Orthodox.

⁴⁰ Census figures suggest that in 1991 there were 168,026 Croats and 55,895 “others” in these areas, though the latter included also Serbs that had identified themselves as “Yugoslav”. See: ICTY, [“The Prosecutor of the Tribunal against Slobodan Milosevic, Second Amended Indictment”](#), §69.

⁴¹ See footnote 13.

⁴² Franjo Tudjman's [Speech in Knin](#), 26 August 1995, www.predsjednik.hr (last accessed 27 May 2013).

Tudjman wanted to keep these Serbs out of Croatia. On 23 May 1997, he told diplomats of the EU, the US and Russia that “no reasonable person in the international community can expect the Croats to accept the Serbs back.”⁴³ When US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pressed him again a few days later, he replied that it would be “insane” to repatriate Serbs who had fled.⁴⁴ For as long as he was president, the state obstructed the return of Croatian Serbs through a thicket of administrative barriers and by resettling Croats displaced from Bosnia in Serb homes.⁴⁵

In addition to its military success, Croatia also achieved a diplomatic coup during the international peace negotiations held in Dayton, Ohio, in late 1995. Serb president Slobodan Milosevic agreed to return control of Eastern Slavonia, still occupied by Serb forces at the time, to Croatia by 1998.⁴⁶ In December 1999, Tudjman died while still in office, having established an independent Croatia within its republican boundaries – although without achieving the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁷

IV. SONS OF USTASHA, SONS OF PARTISANS

After his election in May 1990, president Tudjman began to put his ideas about history education into practice. He surrounded himself with people who shared his ideas about Croatia’s past and his interest in reshaping history textbooks and the curriculum.

According to the communist curriculum from 1972, the teaching of history was meant to enable students:

“to understand the *historical necessity* of the joint liberation struggle and the socialist revolution of the Yugoslav nations, their brotherhood and unity.”⁴⁸

The emphasis was on the heroism of the Partisans and the wrongdoing of the many enemies of the Yugoslav revolution. War crimes committed by communists were not mentioned. Those who had disagreed with Tito, whose picture was in every schoolbook, were erased from this history.

In autumn 1991, with war raging, the Croatian government began revising the communist-era textbooks. The initial work was done in haste; in one instance, a map of Croatia in a fourth grade textbook mistakenly excluded a chunk of Eastern Slavonia – at the time occupied by Serb forces.⁴⁹ The chair of the parliamentary committee responsible for education warned that Yugoslavia still lived in Croatian textbooks. Nationalists attacked the Ministry for its “failure

⁴³ *New York Times*, [“West Warns Croatia on Serbs with Threat to Retain Enclave”](#), 28 May 1997.

⁴⁴ *CNN*, [“Albright gets tough on Croatia”](#), 31 May 1997.

⁴⁵ Ivana Djuric, “The Post-War repatriation of Serb minority Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees in Croatia – Between Discrimination and Political Settlement,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 62/10, December 2010, p. 1643.

⁴⁶ This story is told by Richard Holbrooke in *To End a War*, Random House, 1998, p. 264f.

⁴⁷ Graham Blewitt, an ICTY prosecutor, later claimed that “there would have been sufficient evidence to indict president Tudjman had he still been alive” for war crimes. In the end Tudjman was never indicted, and the indictment against general Gotovina which mentioned Tudjman as a participant of a joint criminal enterprise led to an acquittal in late 2012.

⁴⁸ In socialist Yugoslavia all republics had their own teaching programmes and textbooks. 1972 teaching programme, in: *Zavod za unapredjivanje osnovnog obrazovanja, Nasa osnovna skola, Skolska knjiga Zagreb*, 1974, pp. 133f. Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Snezana Koren, “Slike nacionalne povijesti u hrvatskim udzbenicima uoci i nakon raspada Jugoslavije”, *Historijski zbornik*, LX, 2007, pp. 247-294, p. 261.

to cleanse the textbooks of everything not in the service of the Croatian state.”⁵⁰ Tudjman fired the education minister and his deputy.⁵¹

In June 1992, the ministry of education presented a “Report of the Croatian Government on the state of school textbooks.”⁵² It criticised the textbooks used at the time and defined a clear goal: to eradicate the legacies of the Yugoslav system. To achieve this, the ministry turned to Ivo Peric, a former history teacher who worked at the Institute of Historical Studies, sitting in a 16th-century palace in Dubrovnik. Peric was invited to write a new history textbook, intended to become the only book covering the 20th century for 14-year-old students.⁵³

Why Ivo Peric? In 1971, Peric had already written a textbook that dealt with the 20th century.⁵⁴ His efforts had been supported by none other than Franjo Tudjman.⁵⁵ Tudjman later claimed to have “godfathered really almost everything in it which was new and good,” providing 60 pages of feedback on Peric’s draft.⁵⁶ Shortly after Tudjman was put on trial, in 1972, Peric’s book was withdrawn for being too nationalistic.⁵⁷ With Tudjman as president, Peric got a second chance. He chose Croatian statehood as the central theme. The book noted that “as an old European nation, Croats had their own state since the mid-ninth century”. It was only when Croatia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, after the First World War that “Croatia lost, for the first time after 1,000 years, its statehood.”⁵⁸ The villains in the book were Serbia and the Serbs.

In describing Croatia during the Second World War, Peric also followed Tudjman’s lead. Tudjman claimed in 1990 that the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) of the Ustasha was “*not only* a quisling formation and fascist, but also an expression of the historical aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state.”⁵⁹ Peric’s book explained to students:

“When we speak of the NDH, we must differentiate between the Ustasha regime and the desire of Croats to have their own state. Many Croats did not support the Ustasha regime ... but they supported the need of the Croatian people to have and protect their own state.”⁶⁰

The book noted that Croatia’s Ustasha regime was “carrying out terror against Jews, Gypsies and Serbs.”⁶¹ And yet, the only Ustasha killings Peric explicitly mentioned were those of “some

⁵⁰ Snjezana Koren, “Slike nacionalne povijesti u hrvatskim udzbenicima uoci i nakon raspada Jugoslavije”, *Historijski zbornik*, LX, 2007, pp. 247-294, pp. 261f.

⁵¹ Snjezana Koren, *ibid.*, p. 262.

⁵² *Izvjescje Vlade Republike Hrvatske o stanju skolskih udzbenika*, quoted in: Snjezana Koren, *ibid.*, p. 262.

⁵³ Croatian 8th grade history textbooks cover the period starting from the end of the First World War.

⁵⁴ Ivo Peric, *Povijest, XX Stoljece, za IV Razred Gimnazije*, Skolska Knjiga, 1971. This book was for the 12th grade (4th grade general upper-secondary school).

⁵⁵ Tudjman’s role was formally called reviewer (*recenzent*). This could mean anything from simple proof-reading to writing an assessment to making suggestions on structure and content.

⁵⁶ Franjo Tudjman, *Petrinjska 18*, pp. 320-321 and *Usudbene povjestice*, pp. 278, 287. Quoted by Snjezana Koren, “Udzbenik iz 1971. i udzbenici o 1971.: udzbenicki narativi i politike povijesti 1971. - 2011.” in Tvrtko Jakovina (ed), *Hrvatsko proljece: 20 godina poslije*, 2012, pp. 309-332.

⁵⁷ Peric first produced a new edition of the book in 1972 (in which Tudjman was not named), but even this version was withdrawn the following year.

⁵⁸ Ivo Peric, *Povijest* (History, eight grade), Alfa, 1996 (first 1992), pp. 56; also p. 8 and p. 69. He introduces the chapter on the Ustasa state, “Independent State of Croatia” as follows: “The Croatian nation had its own state in the early Middle Ages, which was governed by Croatian rulers; it had its statehood even within the Croatian-Hungarian kingdom and under the Austrian kings.”

⁵⁹ *Glasnik Hrvatske Demokratske Zajednice*, No. 8, March, 1990. “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ – Uvodno izlaganje dr. Franje Tudjmana”, page 17-21. Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Ivo Peric, *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶¹ Ivo Peric, *Povijest* (History, eight grade), Alfa, 1996 (first 1992), p. 72.

prominent members of the Croatian Peasant Party.”⁶² The leader of the Ustasha, Ante Pavelic, was neither criticized nor linked to any concrete crimes.

Developing Tadjman’s idea of “national reconciliation” between the sons of Croat Ustasha and the sons of Croat Partisans, the schoolbook implied that most crimes committed during the war were committed by Serbs. In a chapter on the “Terror of Chetniks on Croatian soil”, Peric explained that the royalist Serbian Chetniks fought communist Partisans and committed “awful crimes of genocide against Croats and [Bosnian] Muslims, seeking to create – on parts of Bosnia and Croatia – ethnically pure Serbian territories.”⁶³

In a sleight of hand, Peric also managed to assign responsibility for the Partisans’ post-war massacres to Serbs. At the end of the war, tens of thousands of Croatian officials, soldiers and civilians had fled to the border town of Bleiburg in southern Austria. They were handed over by British troops to the Yugoslav Partisans. Thousands were executed on the spot. Others were forced to march under harrowing conditions to camps in Yugoslavia. Peric’s textbook emphasised that towards the end of the war many (Serb) Chetnik fighters joined the Partisans. “Those former Chetniks/Partisans hated anything Croatian and Catholic ... and showed it everywhere, committing crimes: theft, maltreatment, killings.”⁶⁴ No mention is made of the responsibility of Tito (who was half Croat) or of other senior communist leaders.

The message of the book was clear: Croats were, despite ideological differences, part of one nation while Serbs were their eternal enemies. And this had not changed. A short section on the – then still on-going – war of independence stressed:

“Greater Serbian forces committed a lot of – too much – evil in Croatia. Carried by hatred against everything that is Croat and Catholic, the Greater Serbian aggressors tortured, killed, slaughtered and expelled Croats and other non-Serbs, demolished Catholic churches, destroyed Catholic cemeteries, looted and burnt not only individual houses of Croats, but entire Croatian villages ... They also took many to detention camps.”⁶⁵

Later editions of the book devoted additional paragraphs to the “quick and exceptionally successful” military operations of summer 1995. Peric did not mention the Croatian Serb population who fled from these areas or any crimes committed against Serb civilians.

Peric’s book also reflected Tadjman’s views on Croatia’s natural borders. In 1939 royalist Yugoslavia created an administrative entity which included, besides present-day Croatia, also large parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a portion of Serbia. Tadjman argued in 1990 that these borders of a Greater Croatia, including parts of Bosnia, had been “a major step towards resolving the Croatian question.”⁶⁶ Peric described it in his book as a positive step away from “Greater Serbian hegemony.”⁶⁷

In parallel to Peric’s work, another team drafted a new history curriculum. It was led by Agneza Szabo, a historian who worked at the State Archive in Zagreb and was now appointed “special

⁶² Ivo Peric, *ibid.*, pp. 69-73, p. 72.

⁶³ Ivo Peric, *ibid.*, p. 86.

⁶⁴ Ivo Peric, *ibid.*, p. 86.

⁶⁵ Ivo Peric, *ibid.*, pp.116f.

⁶⁶ Darko Hudelist, *Tudjman: Biografija*, Profil, 2004, p. 336.

⁶⁷ Ivo Peric, *ibid.*, p. 59.

consultant” for history textbooks at the ministry. She became the most influential actor in Tudjman’s campaign. Her aim was to foster “healthy patriotism” among the young.⁶⁸

With regard to Croatia during the Second World War the new curriculum omitted references to crimes committed by the Ustasha. Instead teachers were invited to enlighten pupils about the “cultural life” of Hitler’s puppet state. It listed the following issues to be covered for that period:

“Demise and division of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia; organization of the government in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH); subordination to the occupying forces and execution of their will; Ustasha regime; regime that depended on the fate of their agents; economic conditions; organization and forms of cultural life.”⁶⁹

President Tudjman was happy with Szabo’s curriculum and awarded her a presidential decoration.⁷⁰ He appreciated that Croatia’s new nationalist history offered a sense of orientation to a generation growing up in a country at war. It downplayed conflicts between different groups of Croats. It was explicit about Croatia’s enemies. It left open the question of its appropriate borders. Above all it told a story of the nation in which “independence and Franjo Tudjman himself became the teleological fulfilment of Croatian history.”⁷¹

V. ONE HISTORY – MANY HISTORIES

Not everyone shared Tudjman’s views. After Tudjman’s death in December 1999, in early 2000 Croatian voters elected a new government and a new president with different ideas about Croatia’s past, present and future.

Ivica Račan, the new prime minister, was born in a Nazi labour camp in Ebersbach (Germany) in 1944, where his parents were held as political prisoners. At age 17, he joined the communist party. He was elected leader of the League of Communists of Croatia in 1989 and transformed it into a Social Democratic Party. He was appointed prime minister on 27 January 2000. In February 2000 Croats also elected a new president, Stipe Mesic. A co-founder of Tudjman’s party (the Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ), whose father had fought with the communist partisans.

Like Tudjman, Mesic had been a political prisoner for a year under the communist regime. He had broken ranks with Tudjman in 1994, blaming him for collaborating with Serbia’s president Slobodan Milosevic and with radical Bosnian Serbs in destroying and carving up Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷² Unlike Tudjman, Račan and Mesic made clear that they unambiguously accepted Croatia’s borders with Bosnia and Herzegovina. They stopped funding Bosnian Croat separatists. The impact was immediate. Within a few months, all “spontaneous” violence directed against non-Croats in Croat controlled areas of Herzegovina stopped. The Croatian

⁶⁸ Reprinted in: *Prosvjetni vjesnik*, “Nastavni plan i program za osnovno skolu – Povijest”, posebno izdanje (broj 2), June 1999, p. 131.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁷⁰ *Katolicki tjednik*, “[Stadler je zelio Bosnu ‘preobraziti u kristu’](#)”, no date.

⁷¹ Wolfgang Höpken, “Between civic identity and nationalism. History Textbooks in East-Central and Southeastern Europe” in Sabrina P. Ramet and Davorka Matic, *Democratic Transition in Croatia. Value Transformation, Education & Media*, Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2007, pp. 163-192, pp. 186/7.

⁷² See: ICTY, “[Blaskic et al. – transcript, 17 March 1998](#)”, pp. 7154ff.

parliament also adopted a Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, as well as a series of laws granting considerable rights to minorities, including Serbs.⁷³

In April 2000, Račan's government set out to change the way young Croatians were taught history. The ministry of education established a special commission for the evaluation of history textbooks. This commission recommended the immediate rewriting of the most problematic books, the development of a new history curriculum and the subsequent introduction of new books. A few months later, the ministry approved the publication of four new 20th-century history textbooks for the 8th grade.⁷⁴ While Perić's book remained in use until 2003, teachers now had a choice.

A fierce debate ensued. Critics denounced the government's measures as attempts to destroy the Croatian state. At the Congress of Croatian Historians in May 2000, Tuđman's ally Agneza Szabo accused the commission of promoting "pro-Yugoslav conceptions" and "Yugo-communism."⁷⁵

Snezana Koren – a former history teacher and now a lecturer on history pedagogy at Zagreb University – wrote one of the new textbooks published in 2000. Her text directly addressed the crimes of the Ustasha regime, from racial laws against Jews and Roma to Croatian concentration camps where "tens of thousands of people of different nationality lost their lives." Her book noted that, under the Ustasha:

"Serbs were constrained in their movements, fired from work, and there were attempts to make them wear blue ribbons marked with the letter 'P' (Pravoslavni/Orthodox). Their departure was encouraged, and many died due to persecution and in camps."⁷⁶

On the other hand, Koren's 2000 book only briefly dealt with Croatia's war of independence of 1991-1995. It contained six lines on the offensives of 1995. It stated that "a large number of Croatian citizens of Serbian nationality fled" and that "the question of their return is still not completely solved." It did not mention crimes against Serb civilians.⁷⁷ Nor did any of the other new textbooks published in 2000.

In the meantime, the issue of war crimes committed during the war of independence had become dominant in Croatian politics. In February 2001, a district court judge in the coastal city of Rijeka indicted Croatian general Mirko Norac for war crimes – the first time a senior officer had been charged. Norac was accused of ordering and participating in the massacre of Serb civilians in October 1991 in Gospić, a small town in the Dalmatian hinterland, site of a former Ustasha concentration camp. Some 120 Serbs were abducted, detained and executed by

⁷³ The right to use the native language and script in municipalities where they constitute at least a third of the population; guaranteed representation in the state parliament (3 seats); proportional representation in representative bodies at the regional level (where they make up more than 5 percent of the population) and at the local level (where they make up more than 15 per cent of the population). Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina, "[Pravo pripadnika nacionalnih manjina na zastupljenost u predstavničkim i izvršnim tijelima na državnoj i lokalnoj razini, te u tijelima državne uprave, pravosudnim tijelima i tijelima uprave jedinica lokalne i područne \(regionalne\) samouprave](#)", 2012.

⁷⁴ There were four new books for the 8th grade published in 2000 by the following authors: Snjezana Koren; Vesna Djurić; Hrvoje Matković; Maja Brkljačić, Tihomir Ponos and Dario Špelić. See Annex B.

⁷⁵ Snjezana Koren and Branislava Baranović, "What Kind of History Education Do We Have After Eighteen Years of Democracy in Croatia? Transition, Intervention, and History Education Politics (1990-2008)", in Augusta Dimou (ed), *'Transition' and the Politics of History Education in Southeastern Europe*, V&R unipress, 2009, pp. 91-140, p. 109.

⁷⁶ Snjezana Koren, *Povijest* 8, 2001 (2000), p. 91.

⁷⁷ Snjezana Koren, *ibid.*, p. 166.

men under his command. Norac was accused of having personally killed a woman to encourage others to kill.⁷⁸

Some 100,000 people showed up to protest Norac's indictment in Split.⁷⁹ Ivo Sanader, the new leader of the HDZ, told the crowd:

“No nation would abandon its heroes. Nor will the Croatian nation abandon the best of Croatia's sons – and these are General Bobetko [the Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Army 1992-1995] and all the other generals, including one who is not with us physically but who is with us in spirit – General Mirko Norac.”⁸⁰

Croatian nationalists and veteran organisations refused to accept the idea of putting any Croatian soldiers on trial for any crime in their “just war.” However, their protests failed. Norac was arrested, put on trial and sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment.⁸¹

In June 2001, the ICTY prosecutor gave Racan a confidential indictment against General Ante Gotovina, one of the leading generals of Operation Storm in 1995 and a national hero. Gotovina went into hiding. In 2002, the ICTY indicted General Janko Bobetko, for war crimes. Bobetko had lost much of his family to the Ustasha during the Second World War. He joined the partisans before making a career in the Yugoslav military. He was immensely proud of his role in building a new Croatian army and bragged in his book “All my battles” (*Sve moje bitke*) about his direct control over numerous operations – including one in which Serb civilians were executed by Croat soldiers in 1993. Faced with an indictment, Bobetko barricaded himself inside his home, declaring that he would not be taken alive. The crisis ended in 2003 when Bobetko passed away from natural causes.

In late December 2003, Tudjman's HDZ party won national elections and returned to power. Ivo Sanader, Tudjman's successor as party leader, became the new prime minister. He had studied in Austria and had good connections to the Christian Democratic parties in Germany and Austria. Sanader wanted Croatia to join both the EU and NATO. In order to achieve this, he set out to change his party's positions. Most spectacularly, Sanader reached out to Croatia's Serb minority. He formed a government coalition with the main Serb political party. After only two weeks in office, Sanader spoke at an Orthodox Christmas ceremony in Zagreb. With his Serb coalition partner, his government changed laws to facilitate the return of Croatian Serb refugees. Later, in January 2008, Sanader would appoint a Serb, Slobodan Uzelac, as deputy prime minister.

Under Ivo Sanader, Croatia moved towards EU membership. From the very outset, this journey took place under the shadow of the ICTY in The Hague. Events in The Hague and revisions of history schoolbooks now took place in parallel.

⁷⁸ *The Washington Post*, “[Croatia Moves to Expose Its Ugly Secret](#)”, 18 May 2000. See also: ICTY, 2 June 2004. The presiding judge at the Croatian trial tracked down a video tape by the Croatian Ministry of Interior's intelligence service where the head of the Gospić police department talked about a so-called “death meeting” in 1991, the killing of Serbs and the celebration of the executions afterwards.

⁷⁹ *New York Times*, “[Croatian rally protests U.N. and demands early elections](#)”, 12 February 2001.

⁸⁰ Dejan Jovic, “Croatia after Tudjman: the ICTY and issues of transitional justice”, in Judy Batt and Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik (eds), *War crimes, conditionality and EU integration in the Western Balkans*, EUISS, Chaillot Paper 116, June 2009, pp. 13-27, p. 15.

⁸¹ *HRT*, “[Oreskovic, Norac i Grandic proglašeni krivima, Rozic oslobodjen](#)”, 24 March 2003. In 2008 Norac was sentenced to 7 years for another war crime committed in 1993, later commuted into a single sentence of 15 years. He was released in November 2011. *Index*, “[Norac, Petrac i Sulic izasli iz zatvora](#)”, 25 November 2011.

By the time Sanader took power, the EU had made clear that unless Croatia delivered all indicted Croats to The Hague, it would block its path towards membership. Accession talks remained blocked until October 2005. In December 2005, general Ante Gotovina was arrested on the Spanish Canary Islands as a result of surveillance carried out by Croatian authorities. Sanader explained that “there is a constitutional law which commits us to work together with the ICTY. This means that everyone who is indicted has to appear before the court.”⁸² On the weekend after Gotovina’s arrest, numerous protests occurred throughout Croatia. The BBC reported “tens of thousands” taking part in a “massive rally” in Split, close to Gotovina’s birthplace. Some demonstrators wore t-shirts with the caption “Ante Gotovina – pride of his homeland.” Banners said: “We were defended by a hero, not a criminal!”⁸³ In late 2012 Gotovina returned to a hero’s welcome after the ICTY appeals court cleared him of war crimes against Serbs.

VI. SCHOOLBOOK BATTLES

When Eastern Slavonia, a region in the east of Croatia bordering Serbia with a large Serb minority, was peacefully reintegrated in 1998 in accordance with the agreement reached three years earlier at Dayton, Ohio, a moratorium on teaching recent history in the region’s schools was agreed. By September 2005, the moratorium had expired and the Croatian government had to offer a solution to the question of what kind of history 4,150 Serb children should be taught.⁸⁴

Already in the autumn of 2004, the HDZ-led Ministry of education turned to Snjezana Koren to write a “supplementary text on recent history” for Serb pupils.⁸⁵ She and her colleagues presented a text unlike any other available for use in schools. It described how Serbs were dismissed from jobs in government and state-owned firms in the early 1990s. It noted that Franjo Tudjman not only led Croatia to independence, but also violated human rights and clamped down on independent media. It addressed crimes against Serb civilians during and after Operation Storm in 1995. The text included two pictures (see next page): one shows crowds in Zagreb welcoming returning Croatian soldiers; the other, columns of Serb refugees leaving Croatia.

The pictures were accompanied by the following text:

“On sources: pay attention to the two photos taken after the military action ‘Storm’. Each of them tells its own story about the results and consequences: one about victory, and the other about tragedy and loss. Similar scenes could be seen at the beginning of the war, when the roles, however, were reversed. If we use only one photo and ignore the other, we get a one-sided view of the event. Together, the two sources point to the complexity of each historical narrative.”

⁸² ESI interview, see [“Ivo Sanader – Ending the age of Croatian heroes”](#), 4 April 2013.

⁸³ *BBC News*, [“Massive rally for Croatia suspect”](#), 11 December 2005. According to a poll taken just after Gotovina’s arrest, 61 percent of respondents said they found the indictment unfounded. Puls, “61% gradjana vijest o uhicenu Gotovine smatra losom vijesti!”, poll conducted on 8 December 2005 (500 respondents).

⁸⁴ Drago Hedl, [“Croatia: Painful History Lessons”](#), *IWPR*, 6 September 2005.

⁸⁵ Initially the Ministry asked Koren for a supplement for the 8th grade and Tvrtko Jakovina for another one for the 12th grade. In the end Koren, Jakovina and Magdalena Najbar-Agicic worked on one supplement together.



*Welcome of Croatian soldiers after “Operation Storm” in Zagreb
The Serbian population leaves Croatia after “Operation Storm”*

The supplement triggered a fierce debate. More than 60 articles appeared, as historians, journalists and other commentators expressed their outrage. They attacked it for “distortion of the historical truth about the Serb aggression.”⁸⁶ The criticism was so harsh that the ministry of education requested additional reviews. In the end, the ministry agreed with Serb representatives to use Koren’s already available 8th-grade textbook. The supplement was shelved.

But this was not its end. Within a few years, most of the issues tackled in Koren’s supplement found their way into history textbooks used across all of Croatia. In 2007, Documenta, a Croatian NGO that works on reconciliation issues, published Koren’s text in full under the title “One history, many histories” (*Jedna povijest, više historija*).

In 2005, the ministry of education also appointed a commission to work on a new history curriculum, which was completed in 2006. It stated a radically new purpose of history education:

⁸⁶ Quoted in Snjezana Koren and Branislava Baranovic, “What Kind of History Education Do We Have After Eighteen Years of Democracy in Croatia? Transition, Intervention, and History Education Politics (1990-2008), in Augusta Dimou (ed), *‘Transition’ and the Politics of History Education in Southeastern Europe*, V&R unipress, 2009, pp. 91-140, p. 127.

“History classes help pupils understand their own cultural and national roots and foster their national identity. Knowledge about other people and their cultures prepare pupils for *life in a multi-ethnic and multicultural society*.”⁸⁷

Concerning the Ustasha regime, the 2006 curriculum suggested that teachers:

“describe how and under what terms the NDH was created; assess the Ustasha regime and condemn the policies of terror against citizens (especially Serbs, Jews and Roma), racial laws and concentration camps – Jasenovac.”⁸⁸

Concerning Croatia’s most recent war, however, the new curriculum noted that classes should include “naming examples of Croatian defenders” and a “clear explanation of how the war came about, who is the aggressor and who is the victim.”⁸⁹ There had been debates about every sentence. An earlier draft of the curriculum had referred to Ustasha “policies of terror against Croatian citizens and *genocide* against Serbs, Jews and Roma.” The reference to genocide was dropped.⁹⁰ So was an explicit reference to the exodus of the Serbian population after Operation Storm.⁹¹

The new curriculum required new textbooks. In 2007, the ministry appointed a textbook commission to select and approve them. As its head it chose Mario Jareb, who worked at the (renamed) historical institute that Tudjman had founded in 1961.⁹² Jareb had been a member of the Croatian army from 1994 to 1995. As he later told ESI, he was a believer in patriotic history:

“I think that in each country, one should promote patriotism ... I do believe that we should care about having citizens who love their country, who are proud of it, and not teach them that their country is some kind of criminal creation one should flee from.”⁹³

Jareb is a historian with international experience. He had obtained his masters degree at the Central European University in Budapest and been a Fulbright fellow at the University of Indiana. He had specialised in Second World War history and wrote a Ph.D. on the Ustasha movement. Jareb was also for many years a member of the Croatian delegation to the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education.⁹⁴

The new curriculum presented an opportunity to propose different books, and young authors seized it. Kresimir Erdelja, a history teacher at a Zagreb primary school, submitted a manuscript that he co-wrote with a colleague. Erdelja was passionate about teaching. He insisted on including the history of ordinary people, “for pupils to see that history doesn’t consist solely of wars, battles and generals.”⁹⁵ He and his co-author, Igor Stojakovic, accepted no taboos. In their book, they described crimes committed by the Ustasha regime, by communist partisans, by

⁸⁷ Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, “Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu skolu”, History, introduction, in: [Narodne Novine, No. 102, 15 September 2006](#), p. 6955 (*uvod*). Emphasis added.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, “Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu skolu”, History, 8th grade, section 6, in: [Narodne Novine, No. 102, 15 September 2006](#), p. 6960.

⁸⁹ Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, *ibid.*, section 10, p. 6961.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Snjezana Koren and Branislava Baranovic, “What Kind of History Education Do We Have After Eighteen Years of Democracy in Croatia? Transition, Intervention, and History Education Politics (1990-2008), in Augusta Dimou (ed), [‘Transition’ and the Politics of History Education in Southeastern Europe](#), V&R unipress, 2009, pp. 91-140, p. 121.

⁹¹ Quoted in Snjezana Koren and Branislava Baranovic, *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹² *Jutarnji List*, [“Udzbenik koji presucuje ili navodi srpske zrtve u Oluji”](#), 4 April 2007.

⁹³ ESI interview with Mario Jareb, 13 March 2013.

⁹⁴ The organisation was meanwhile renamed International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, <http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us>.

⁹⁵ This and other quotes by Erdelja on this page: ESI interview with Kresimir Erdelja, 19 March 2013.

Serbian forces against Croats in the early 1990s and by Croatian forces against Serb civilians in 1995.

History textbook commission head and textbook authors



Mario Jareb
(head of textbook commission)



Kresimir Erdelja
(textbook author)



Snjezana Koren
(textbook author)

The draft went back and forth between the Jareb commission and the authors. The commission objected to specific passages, such as one saying that “some Croatian politicians contributed to the success of [Serbian] propaganda” in the early 1990s “with ill-considered statements.”⁹⁶ Talking about his interaction with the commission, Erdelja recalled:

“They understood it as equalising guilt, as if our side was equally responsible for the war. Which is nonsense, because we have a whole paragraph saying how the rebellion was fuelled by Belgrade, by Serbian agitation comparing everything Croatian to the Independent State of Croatia [the Ustasha state]. I think we described correctly the atmosphere of those times. At the same time it wouldn’t be correct to omit that on the Croatian side, too, there were those who were ready to respond, in the same manner, to the provocations coming from the Serbian side.”⁹⁷

The commission accepted his arguments. Its members only insisted on dropping two critical sentences about Tudjman. Erdelja instead “put some tangible examples” of how Tudjman had undermined the democratisation of the country. This was accepted.

On 4 April 2007, the daily *Jutarnji list* printed short excerpts from the new history textbooks that the commission had just approved. Tudjman’s supporters were outraged. Agneza Szabo and 27 other Croatian academics, including eighteen members of the Academy of Sciences and Arts, signed an open letter addressed to the prime minister, the speaker of parliament and the education minister. They warned that “history textbooks should, besides scientific and pedagogical standards, also take into account *national and state interests*.”⁹⁸ They claimed that some of the new textbooks, including Erdelja’s, were “biased and one-sided.” The authors of

⁹⁶ Kresimir Erdelja and Igor Stojakovic, *Tragom Proslasti* 8, 2009 (2007), p. 233.

⁹⁷ ESI interview with Kresimir Erdelja, 19 March 2013.

⁹⁸ Open letter of 20 academics and 10 historians, “Otvoreno pismo predsjedniku Vlade, predsjedniku Hrvatskog Sabora, Ministru za znanost, obrazovanje i sport i saborskom Odboru za obrazovanje, znanost i kulturu”, first published 10 April 2007. Republished in “Povjesnicari, udžbenici i nastava povijesti u suvremenoj Hrvatskoj”, *Povijest u nastavi*, Vol. V/9(1), June 2007, pp. 5-10. Emphasis added.

the letter also attacked the new textbook submitted by Snjezana Koren. They focused on the following passage of her book as evidence how she fought “with hands and feet against a positive description of Croatia’s recent war”:

“The Serb population from these areas mostly fled to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Serbia immediately after the start of military action. Only few remained; *during the following months the killing of several hundred Serbian civilians as well as the looting and arson of abandoned Serbian property were recorded.* A part of the Serbian refugees returned to their homes in the following years, but the question of their return is still not fully resolved.”⁹⁹

The authors of the letter did not object to any specific facts: several hundred Serb civilians *had* been killed, and Serb homes *had* been looted and burned. It objected to the way facts were presented: “Two sentences on the suffering of Serbs as opposed to seven sentences that inform the pupils about everything else that happened [to Croats],” such as the establishment of “[Serb] concentration camps,” “the ethnic cleansing of parts of Croatia” and “the savage bombing of Zagreb.” The signatories of the letter wanted more emphasis on the “securing of the survival of Croatia and the Croatian people,” “the reversal of the results of ethnic cleansing and genocide that Serbian terrorists committed in 1991” and the “renewal of life and the return of displaced Croats.”

For Szabo and her colleagues, it was not sufficient that Koren referred to crimes committed by Serbian forces in earlier passages of her book. They wanted to preserve the image of Croats as victims and Serbs as perpetrators *at all times*. The open letter called for the textbooks by Erdelja and Koren to be withdrawn.¹⁰⁰

In the end, they failed. Other historians signed an open letter defending Erdelja and Koren against Szabo and her colleagues.¹⁰¹ Jareb stood by his commission’s decision to approve their books. The HDZ-led ministry of education agreed. An assistant education minister stated that the ministry did not see any reason to withdraw Erdelja’s and Koren’s books.¹⁰²

Snjezana Koren recalled that, after discussing her book with the Jareb commission, “details were changed. However, I changed nothing that I could not live with.”¹⁰³ This did not mean that Jareb agreed with her text.¹⁰⁴ He later explained to ESI:

“I am not in favour of bans. I am for discussions. Every ban makes the one who is banned a victim and things get mystified. I prefer discussing things and showing if something is valid or not.”¹⁰⁵

Rather than banning the textbooks of others, Jareb set out to write his own history textbook, published in 2008.

⁹⁹ Snjezana Koren, *Povijest 8*, 2007, pp. 227-8. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ Open letter of 20 academics and 10 historians, *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ “Otvoreno o otvorenom pismu grupe povjesnicara i znanstvenika”, first published 2 May 2007. Republished in “Povjesnicari, udzbenici i nastava povijesti u suvremenoj Hrvatskoj”, [Povijest u nastavi, Vol. V/9\(1\), June 2007, p. 11.](#)

¹⁰² *Jutarnji List*, “Ministarstvo akademicima: Povjerenstvo za udzbenike radilo strucno”, 10 April 2007.

¹⁰³ ESI interview with Snjezana Koren, 18 March 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Jareb even co-wrote a whole book about Koren’s shelved supplemental history text (much of which she had incorporated into her 2007 textbook), arguing that its treatment of the 1990s and the war was wrong. Robert Skenderovic, Mario Jareb and Mato Artukovic, *Multiperspektivnost ili relativiziranje: “Dodatak udzbenicima za najnoviju povijest” i istina o Domovinskom ratu*, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2008.

¹⁰⁵ ESI interview with Mario Jareb, 13 March 2013.

In 2011, the most widely used book was the one by Kresimir Erdelja and Igor Stojakovic.¹⁰⁶ 39 percent of pupils used this book.¹⁰⁷ The second was by Mario Jareb and Stjepan Bekavac.¹⁰⁸ It was used by 25 per cent of pupils. The third was Snjezana Koren's book, used by 19 per cent of pupils.¹⁰⁹

In July 2013, when Croatia joined the European Union, there were four history books in use for the 8th grade. All describe how the Ustasha regime pursued the goal of a national homeland exclusively for Croats. Erdelja's book refers to "Ustasha terror against Serbs, Jews and Roma," Jareb's to "persecution and mass killings of the Serbian population," Koren's book to the "genocide of Serbs, Jews and Roma" and a fourth book to the "persecution of Serbs." All mention the racial laws and note that Jews had to wear a yellow star, suffered from expropriations and imprisonment and were murdered in concentration camps. All describe Jasenovac, the largest Croatian concentration camp where Serbs, Jews, Roma and antifascist Croats were killed, giving figures of victims consistent with those given by the US holocaust museum and international historians. Looking closer at the content of these books, it is remarkable how much they all differ from the book of Ivo Peric that was used in the 1990s (see Annex A).

VII. TEACHING ABOUT JUST WARS

A few generations ago, the point of teaching wartime history in school was obvious: it was to instil patriotism. The main message was clear: in a violent and dangerous world, the survival of any nation depends on its ability to win its battles. Thus wars, though always tragic, were the ultimate test of a nation's valour.

In November 1939, a month after Poland's defeat by Nazi Germany, the British writer and former diplomat Harold Nicholson wrote a booklet that became an instant success: "Why Britain is at war." Nicholson explained that "British people are by nature peaceful and kindly ... they have no ambition for honour and glory, and they regard wars, and even victories, as silly, ugly, wasteful things. They are not either warriors or heroes until they are forced to become so; they are sensible and gentle women and men."¹¹⁰ But as an "Anglo-Saxon race" shaped by a "mixture of realism and idealism", the British people also realised when they had to pick up arms: "all great civilisations have, in the end, perished owing to defeat in war. It was the victory of their opponents which put an end to the Babylonian, the Persian, the Carthaginian, the Roman, the Byzantine and the Napoleonic Empires."¹¹¹ And in 1939, with the Third Reich on the verge of putting the whole of Europe under Nazi domination, only Britain could prevent a new dark age and lay a foundation for a very different Europe:

"We should achieve a world which is worth fighting for. A world without conceit or cruelty, without greed and lies. If Hitler triumphs, then such a world will be impossible for many generations. It is Britain alone that can create the United States of Europe."¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Kresimir Erdelja and Igor Stojakovic, *Tragom Proslosti 8*, 2nd edition, Skolska knjiga, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ For data of the use of the 4 books: Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, "Postotna zastupljenost udžbenika i pripadajućih dopunskih nastavničkih sredstava", data from school year 2010/11.

¹⁰⁸ Stjepan Bekavac and Mario Jareb, *Povijest 8*, 2nd edition, Alfa, 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Snjezana Koren, *Povijest 8*, 3rd edition, Profil, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Harold Nicholson, *Why Britain is at War*, Viking, 2010[1939], p. 128.

¹¹¹ Harold Nicholson, *ibid.*, p. 142.

¹¹² Harold Nicholson, *Why Britain is at War*, Viking, 2010[1939], p. 160.

Between September 1940 and November 1941, Germany bombed London, Coventry and many other British cities, killing over 60,000 civilians and destroying two million homes.¹¹³ The fighting lasted six years. In the end, Britain and its allies prevailed. In 1946, Winston Churchill, Britain's wartime leader, speaking at Zurich University, repeated Nicholson's message, calling on Europeans to "build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living."¹¹⁴ Then Churchill put his pen to paper and composed his masterpiece, earning him a Nobel Prize for literature, a multi-volume account of Britain's finest hour: *The Second World War*.

Seventy years later, the memories of this glorious war are still alive in British debates. But while the narrative of saving European civilisation remains an inspiration, some aspects of Britain's wartime history have given rise to debates similar to those seen in Croatia. One issue in particular has emerged as controversial: the role of the war-time Bomber Command under Air Marshall Arthur Harris. Throughout the war, British (and other allied) pilots carried explosives and incendiary chemical weapons over enemy territory and then dropped them, without much accuracy, on workers, families and houses. They did so across Europe: from Bulgaria to Italy, from occupied France to Germany. A British press briefing referred to the strategy as "deliberate terror bombing."¹¹⁵ It was a strategy praised by Churchill himself when he met Stalin in Moscow in August 1942:

THE PRIME MINISTER: ... As regards the civilian population, we looked upon it as a military target. We sought no mercy and we would show no mercy.

M. STALIN said that was the only way.

THE PRIME MINISTER: said we hoped to shatter twenty German cities as we had shattered Cologne, Lubeck, Dusseldorf, and so on. More and more aeroplanes and bigger and bigger bombs.¹¹⁶

By May 1945, the Allies had attacked sixty-one German cities, including massive raids on Hamburg, Berlin and finally Dresden where, in fourteen hours on 13 February 1945, they killed 25,000 to 30,000 people through the deliberate creation of a horrific firestorm.¹¹⁷ By the end of the war, 131 German cities had been bombed and some 600,000 Germans had been killed by strategic bombing. These were no accidental casualties; the strategic rationale of the campaign was to destroy the morale of the civilian population.¹¹⁸

Following the war, the question arose as to how this campaign, the pilots or their commander, Arthur Harris, should be remembered. Within a few years, some historians began to question the military value of the bombing campaign. Today, many historians agree with Richard Overy, who concluded in *The Bombing War* that strategic bombing proved both morally compromised and strategically inadequate. And yet, the men involved had taken extraordinary risks and suffered huge casualties. The Bomber Command consisted of some 125,000 volunteers with an average age of 22. More than 56,000 died and 10,000 were taken prisoner. Those who argued

¹¹³ Yuki Tanaka and Marilyn B. Young, *Bombing Civilians – A Twentieth Century History*, The New Press, 2009, p.2.

¹¹⁴ Council of Europe, ["Winston Churchill, speech delivered at the University of Zurich, 19 Sept. 1946"](#).

¹¹⁵ Yuki Tanaka and Marilyn B. Young, *ibid.*, p. 42.

¹¹⁶ Official UK Protocol, Moscow meeting 12 August 1942. Quoted in Richard Overy, *The Bombing War*, Penguin, 2014, p. 625.

¹¹⁷ Yuki Tanaka and Marilyn B. Young, *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 4.

that the pilots should be honoured noted that “the losses of the Bomber Command were greater than those of any other service.”¹¹⁹

Thus, two questions came together in this debate: is bombing civilians indiscriminately a war crime? And, if so, could those involved in it be honoured like all other soldiers who had fought to defend their country and European civilisation? Overy points out that, even at the time of the campaign, Allied leaders were aware that the bombing of civilians “violated every accepted norm in the conduct of modern warfare, whether it was done by the German, British or American air forces.” This had consequences for the indictments at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders:

“The legal issue was well understood at the time. In summer 1945 the victorious Allies at first intended to add the bombing of cities to the indictment they were drawing up for the major German war criminals. On the advice of the British Foreign Office, this particular charge was quietly withdrawn since it was self-evident that German defence lawyers would have little difficulty in tarring Allied bombing with the same brush.”¹²⁰

After the war, when the Geneva Convention was agreed in 1949, Article 51 stated unequivocally that civilian populations “shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited.” The Convention specified that this includes “an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, *which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.*” The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia later applied the Geneva Convention in its judgements. Stanislav Galic, a commander in the Bosnian Serb Army, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the bombing of civilians in Sarajevo:

“Galic conducted a campaign of sniping and shelling attacks on the city of Sarajevo and did so with the primary aim of spreading terror among the city’s civilian population. These attacks, which took place on an almost daily basis, over many months, resulted in the killing of hundreds of men and women of all ages, including children, and the wounding of thousands, with the intent of terrorising the population of the city.”¹²¹

In 2013, *The Economist* wrote about the bombing campaign in the Second World War as a “costly brutal failure.”¹²² In February 2015, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby’s spoke of his “regret” for the bombing.¹²³

After the war, British authorities hesitated to build a memorial to the Bomber Command. Arthur Harris became increasingly bitter. During the war, he had warned that, “The Nazis entered the war under the childish delusion they were going to bomb everybody else, but nobody was going to bomb them ... They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind.” Speaking in 1977, Arthur Harris was entirely unrepentant: “I would destroy Dresden again.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ *conservativehome*, [“Lord Ashcroft: Why I have given £ 1 million to the Bomber Command Memorial”](#), 4 May 2011.

¹²⁰ Richard Overy, *The Bombing War*, Penguin, 2014, p. 630.

¹²¹ ICTY, [“Case Information Sheet: Stanislav Galic”](#).

¹²² *The Economist*, [“Strategic bombing, 1939-45 A costly, brutal failure”](#), 21 September 2013.

¹²³ *The Daily Mail*, [“Archbishop ‘says sorry’ for bombing the Nazis: Justin Welby attacked for ‘bizarre apology’ for Dresden raids, but makes no reference to RAF heroes killed by Hitler”](#), 14 February 2015.

¹²⁴ *War History Online*, [“‘I would have destroyed Dresden again’: Bomber Harris was unrepentant over German city raids 30 years after the end of WWII”](#), 11 February 2013.

When plans were announced to build a monument in his honor after his death in 1984, some British papers were skeptical. *The Times* of London urged that the project be abandoned, calling Harris a “fanatical believer in the carpet bombing of civilians.” Representatives of the city of Coventry – by now a sister city with Dresden – expressed unease. The canon of Coventry Cathedral, destroyed by German bombs and rebuilt as a symbol of reconciliation between Germany and Britain in 1963, noted that this was an “unfortunate commemoration.”¹²⁵ After the statue of Arthur Harris was erected outside the Royal Air Force Church near the London School of Economics in 1992, it was regularly defaced by graffiti. A monument to the Bomber Command itself was only unveiled by the Queen in London’s Green Park in 2012, almost 70 years after the war ended.

What does all of this mean for the teaching of the war in schools? The interest in the epic confrontation between the United Kingdom and Nazi Germany remains immense. As British historian Niall Ferguson put it, while England is the only country in Europe where history is not compulsory for students beyond the age of 14 there is also “an excessive concentration ... on learning about either Hitler or the Henrys – the Third Reich or the Tudors.”¹²⁶ However, teaching materials in UK schools present the issue of civilian bombing – and the case of Dresden in particular – in all its moral ambiguity. Teaching materials refer to the Second World War as meeting the conditions for a just war – a war with a just cause, fought with the intention to establish good and correct evil, fought as a last resort after all diplomatic negotiations have been tried and failed and respecting the rights of civilians. But they also draw attention to “actions like the Allied bombing of Dresden, a two-day raid by almost 2,400 bombers that destroyed the city and killed perhaps 135,000 civilians to virtually no military purpose” as violating these conditions.¹²⁷ Books are critical of the impact and the motivation of the bombing of Dresden. Students are presented first-hand accounts from German victims.

“In all, over three waves of attacks, 3,300 tons of bombs were dropped on the city. Many of the bombs that were dropped were incendiary bombs. These created so much fire that a firestorm developed. The more the city burned, the more oxygen was sucked in – and the greater the firestorm became.”¹²⁸

The United State wrestles with similar issues over how to remember the bombing of civilians in Japan in 1945. Some US school textbooks examine the decision by the US president to drop two nuclear bombs at the end of the war critically, note the alternative strategies available at the time and consider the human and political costs. One author, Mark Seldon, noted in 2005 that many textbooks “dramatize the atomic bombing photographically, showing the mushroom cloud or Hiroshima or Nagasaki in ruins,” but that “none reveal the human face of the bombing by showing mangled corpses, orphaned children, or stunned people wandering amidst the devastation after the blast.”¹²⁹ Seldon concluded that “despite the critical tone of certain textbooks on the atomic decision ... most texts celebrate U.S. victory in the war and its global consequences with scant reference to the human costs, particularly costs to civilians as a result of U.S. actions.”¹³⁰ He also noted a striking omission in most US textbooks: very few texts made any reference to the air war in the months prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb; the

¹²⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, [“Britons debate appropriateness of honouring Arthur ‘Bomber’ Harris”](#), 5 January 1992.

¹²⁶ Ferguson noted that according to 2006 exam data “a staggering 80 per cent of A-level candidates study the history of the Third Reich.” *Financial Times*, [“Too much Hitler and the Henrys”](#), 9 April 2010.

¹²⁷ BBC GCSE Bitesize, [“Conditions for a Just War”](#), accessed 21 August 2015.

¹²⁸ The History Learning Site, [“The Bombing of Dresden”](#), accessed 21 August 2015.

¹²⁹ Mark Seldon, [“Remembering ‘The Good War’: The Atomic Bombing and the Internment of Japanese-Americans in U.S. History Textbooks”](#), *Asia-Pacific Journal*, 8 May 2005.

¹³⁰ Mark Seldon, [“Remembering ‘The Good War’: The Atomic Bombing and the Internment of Japanese-Americans in U.S. History Textbooks”](#), *Asia-Pacific Journal*, 8 May 2005.

destruction of 62 Japanese cities and the firebombing of Tokyo that together claimed some 300,000 lives. Seldon wrote that:

“this is among the gravest weaknesses of many of the texts, one that is shared, however, by the monographic literature on the war that likewise focuses on the atomic bombs and pays scant attention to firebombing of cities.”

This omission reflects general attitudes in the US military towards the legitimacy of bombing civilians. The idea that the mass killing of enemy civilians was justifiable and at times indispensable remained central to US military doctrine. While the US dropped 2 million tons of bombs during the Second World War, it dropped more than 8 million tons on Indochina during the Vietnam War in the 1960s. One study, describing the bombing of civilians during the Cold War, noted that “the estimated toll of the dead, the majority civilian, is... difficult to absorb: 2 to 3 million in Korea; 2 to 4 million in Vietnam.”¹³¹ It was not until 1990 that US history textbooks began to include some of the most disturbing photographs of bombing victims that had helped to swing public opinion against the Vietnam War.¹³²

The way that wars are taught in school is not just about how the past is remembered, but about what values are upheld in the present. School books reflect changes in values, norms and international humanitarian law. At the same time changes in textbooks can confirm the emergence of new norms and sensibilities, as on the issue of the arrest and detention of citizens on the basis of ethnicity during war-time. In the early stages of the Second World War, following the attack on its fleet in Pearl Harbour by Japan in 1941, the US government decided to deprive 112,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans of their liberty. They were interned for the duration of the war. Most were U.S. citizens; one third were Japanese citizens and long-time residents, barred by discriminatory legislation passed in 1924 from obtaining citizenship. One commander, who urged the internment, stated at the time that “A Jap is a Jap. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not.”¹³³

Following the end of the war US history textbooks presented the internment as a military necessity; as one influential 1949 text concluded:

“The civil liberties record was one of which every American can be proud. There was no hysteria, no persecution of dissenters ... The presence on the Pacific coast of some 100,000 Japanese posed a special problem. Because, in the emergency after Pearl Harbor, the army could not take time to investigate every Japanese, it worked out instead a rough-and-ready solution ... relocation camps.”¹³⁴

In 2005, Mark Seldon examined how the decision to intern citizens on an ethnic basis was treated in nineteen US history textbooks spanning the years 1958 to 2000.¹³⁵ He noted that the earliest textbooks, published in the 1950s, did not discuss it. But by the 1970s and 1980s, the leading high school texts described the internment as “shameful,” “tragic,” “war hysteria,” “a grave injustice,” and “disgraceful.” Books referred to anti-Japanese racism in the US. Eight

¹³¹ Yuki Tanaka, Marilyn B. Young, *Bombing Civilians – A Twentieth Century History*, *ibid.*, p. 157.

¹³² James Lowen, *Lies my teacher told me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, Touchstone, 2007[1995].

¹³³ Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps: North America, Japanese in the United States and Canada*, during World War II, 1981.

¹³⁴ Laura Hein, “[Teaching War Is Not Easy: Controversies in Japan, Germany, and the United States](#)”, Wilson Center, 1 January 2001.

¹³⁵ Mark Seldon, “[Remembering ‘The Good War’: The Atomic Bombing and the Internment of Japanese-Americans in U.S. History Textbooks](#)”, *Asia-Pacific Journal*, 8 May 2005.

books examined by Seldon included “sympathetic photos of Japanese and Japanese-Americans, especially women and children, in their best clothes waiting patiently in long queues before being herded into buses and trains en route to the camps.”¹³⁶

What lay behind this dramatic change of stance? On the one hand, there was pressure from Japanese-Americans, arguing that the interment had been both unconstitutional and racist. There was also a wider shift in attitudes on racism and civil liberties:

“Most textbooks and many teachers now see their educational responsibility as affirming the ideals of just and equitable treatment of citizens and condemning racism rather than defending this particular government action.”¹³⁷

But in important respects, changes to the school text books also preceded and helped to bring about a wider change in social attitudes. In 1983 a Congressional commission concluded that the internment of 120,000 Japanese-American citizens and resident aliens had been a “grave injustice” motivated by “racial prejudice, war hysteria and failure of political leadership.”¹³⁸ In 1988, Congress passed a Civil Liberties Act including reparations for Japanese-American victims.¹³⁹

How schools teach issues such as interment, bombing of civilians, torture or ethnic cleansing sends a signal that goes far beyond the classroom. Autocracies like Putin’s Russia try to whitewash their wars, even passing laws that make it a criminal offense to raise questions about the conduct of Soviet soldiers or to knowingly disseminate “false information” about the Soviet activities during the war.¹⁴⁰ Democracies with a commitment to international law, such as the Geneva Conventions and the charter of the International Criminal Court, must be willing to apply those standards to their own conduct, as well as that of others.

Modern humanitarian law is equally binding on countries fighting just wars, or wars of self-defence, as it is on aggressors. A willingness to condemn violations of the laws of war even in support of a just cause is a litmus test of a country’s commitment to international norms. As the British daily *The Independent* wrote in 2004, advocating an official apology for the bombing of Dresden: “Is it really so hard to understand that you can support a war while objecting to some of the individual war crimes committed during the course of the fighting?”¹⁴¹ In fact, it is surprisingly hard, even for established democracies – hard, but essential if such crimes are to become less common in the future.

VIII. WHY CROATIAN TEXTBOOKS MATTER

In January 2015, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, until then Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy at NATO, became the fourth president of Croatia since its independence. She chose to celebrate her election victory with Croatian veterans in Zagreb, where she promised to “continue where our first Croatian president, Dr. Franjo Tudjman, left off ... I know what you want and what you are looking for – above all, respect and acceptance of the Homeland War as

¹³⁶ Mark Seldon, *ibid.*

¹³⁷ Laura Hein, “[Teaching War Is Not Easy: Controversies in Japan, Germany, and the United States](#)”, Wilson Center, 1 January 2001.

¹³⁸ *New York Times*, “[Wartime internment of Japanese was ‘grave injustice,’ panel says](#)”, 25 February 1983.

¹³⁹ Densho Encyclopedia, “[Civil Liberties Act of 1988](#)”, last accessed 10 September 2015.

¹⁴⁰ *RFE*, “[Putin Signs Law Criminalizing Denial Of Nazi War Crimes](#)”, 15 September 2015.

¹⁴¹ *The Independent*, “[The Queen should apologise to Dresden](#)”, 3 November 2004.

the foundation of Croatia.”¹⁴² A few months later, Croatia’s SDP-led government announced that Zagreb’s airport would be named after Franjo Tudjman.¹⁴³ Croatia’s prime minister had already demanded that a “more worthy square” in the capital should be dedicated to Croatia’s founding president.¹⁴⁴ And in July 2015, Zagreb’s mayor announced that the city would build “the largest and most beautiful monument in Croatia” for Tudjman, a man who “most clearly expressed the idea of an independent Croatia.”¹⁴⁵ It looks as if a competition has broken out between the leaders of all the political parties as to who can best honour Croatia’s founding president.

Yet Croatia today is a very different country from the one Tudjman founded. Back in 1999, it was internationally isolated. European leaders refused to attend Tudjman’s funeral. A quarter century later, it is a member of both NATO and the European Union. The biography of Grabar-Kitarovic, Croatia’s first female president, could not be more different from that of Tudjman, the communist partisan, political prisoner and nationalist intellectual. Grabar-Kitarovic was an exchange student in New Mexico, a student at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, Fulbright scholar at George Washington University and fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. As foreign minister and ambassador to the US she played a key role in her country’s accessions to NATO and the EU. So what does it mean in 2015 to promise to “continue where Tudjman left off?” Does renewed enthusiasm for the war-time leader signal a return to his vision of Croatia’s history? Does it signify a nostalgia for the ideals of the 1990s?

Imagine for one moment that textbooks had not changed in Croatia since 2000; that students continue to be taught today that Serbs are their historical enemies; that the crimes of the partisans, including mass executions after the Second World War, were committed mainly by Serbs; that there was some good in the policies and ideals of the Ustasha movement as it was committed to an independent Greater Croatia, including Bosnia and Herzegovina; and that there was no need to mention any crimes committed by Croats during any of Croatia’s recent wars. In such a scenario, Croatia’s minorities, neighbours and other European nations would have good reason not to trust official commitments to democracy and human rights.

Croatia’s progress in coming to terms with its recent history and providing a more balanced account in its textbooks is therefore extremely important. It compares favourably to the record of both Britain and the US, which took many decades to face up to the complex moral legacy of the Second World War. Croatia’s willingness to tackle this difficult subject provides a level of confidence that periodic shifts in political rhetoric, as we see today, do not signal a fundamental shift away from the values of democracy and human rights.

But might Croatian leaders yet be tempted to reverse what has been achieved in recent years when it comes to dealing honestly with the past? Such reversals have happened in Putin’s Russia in recent years. They have also occurred in Japan. They have been attempted in France in respect of the Algerian war of independence. In all three cases, these reversals have coincided with and fed tensions between Russia and its neighbours, Japan and other East Asian countries, and France and its former colonies. History wars have real consequences. Croatia’s leaders may yet choose to go down the Russian or Japanese path, using nationalist history to reinforce the lines of division within Croatia, and between Croatia and its neighbours.

Of course, history is not just learned from textbooks. As Kresimir Erdelja, co-author of one of Croatia’s most popular books, told ESI: “Learning history in school is just one stone in a

¹⁴² *Balkan Insight*, [“New Croatian president celebrates with protesting veterans”](#), 12 January 2015.

¹⁴³ *Balkan Insight*, [“Croats to Rename Airport after Tudjman”](#), 30 June 2015.

¹⁴⁴ *Dnevnik*, [“Milanovic: Franjo Tudjman jos uvijek u Zagrebu nema dostojan trg”](#), 25 June 2015.

¹⁴⁵ *Balkan Insight*, [“Tudjman Takes Zagreb, 15 Years After Death”](#), 13 July 2015.

mosaic. There is the family, there are the media, all of which create an image in the heads of children.” He added:

“From time to time, when I teach about the Second World War, the Ustasha and their leader Ante Pavelic, there’s a boy in class whose lips slightly widen to a smile. You can see that he would love to say something, but he doesn’t dare. Then I can only hope that I have taught them well, that I have managed to make the students grasp that this was evil, and that there is no reason whatsoever to put pictures of that man on the wall in 10 or 20 years.”¹⁴⁶

And yet, textbooks are crucial. They transmit ideas of citizenship; and they signal to adults the depth of a nation’s commitment to human rights and fundamental values, in peace time and in war. Textbooks are thus central to the future of Europe and the Balkans.

There are no EU standards when it comes to teaching history, although few issues are more important for the future of the European project. EU institutions have no position on how schools in Madrid should teach the Spanish Civil War, how teachers in Paris talk about torture in Algeria or how textbooks in Prague deal with the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. National authorities in the 28 member states, not EU institutions, authorise textbooks. This will not change.

This also means that Croatian society – historians, teachers, journalists, politicians and voters – have to defend the teaching of adult history, committed to the values of modern Europe, in its schools. Whether they succeed matters beyond Croatia’s borders. Today, textbook authors across the Balkans face the challenge of explaining wars and war crimes, fascism, communism, ethnic cleansing and systematic violations of human rights in their recent past. Some Balkan countries still use textbooks similar to those used in Croatian schools in the 1990s, telling children stories of a nation surrounded by enemies, with national heroes and foreign villains, periods of suffering and victimhood alternating with military triumphs: nursery histories of the worst kind.

Mark Mazower noted at the end of his magisterial history of Thessaloniki:

“As small states integrate themselves in a wider world, and even the largest learn how much they need their neighbours’ help to tackle the problems that face them all, the stringently patrolled and narrow-minded conception of history which they once nurtured and which gave them a kind of justification starts to look less plausible and less necessary. Other futures may require other pasts.”¹⁴⁷

And other futures will require other textbooks. In textbook debates around the world, it is not the past, but this future that is really at stake.

¹⁴⁶ ESI Interview with Kresimir Erdelja, 19 March 2013.

¹⁴⁷ Mark Mazower, *Salonica. City of Ghosts*, Knopf, 2006 (2004), p. 439.

ANNEX A: THE HISTORY CROATS LEARN

In July 2013, when Croatia joined the European Union, there were four history books in use for the 8th grade. This is the point in their education when Croatian pupils, aged 14, study the 20th century for the first time. There are two units of history of 45 minutes each per week, for a total of fifty hours of instruction each year.¹⁴⁸

In 2011, the most widely used book was the one by Kresimir Erdelja and Igor Stojakovic (here: Book I – ER).¹⁴⁹ 39 percent of pupils used this book.¹⁵⁰

The second was by Mario Jareb and Stjepan Bekavac (Book II – JA).¹⁵¹ It was used by 25 per cent of pupils.

The third was Snjezana Koren’s book, used by 19 per cent of pupils (Book III – KO).¹⁵²

The fourth book was by Vesna Djuric, a history teacher at a Zagreb primary school (Book IV – DJ).¹⁵³ It was used by 18 per cent of pupils.

History textbook authors



Kresimir Erdelja
(co-author textbook I)



Mario Jareb
(co-author textbook II)



Snjezana Koren
(author textbook III)

These authors had all reflected on the challenge of writing textbooks. Erdelja, a passionate teacher born in 1968, illustrated his understanding of how to teach history, which is “neither black nor white”, by reference to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima: “We included a letter from two girls that survived it, one who was eight-year-old at the time and still troubled by the fact that she did not give water to someone else as she was fleeing. And we included a statement by Paul Tibbets, the man who dropped the bomb and who has no guilty conscience.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Since the school year 2014/15 a new set of books is in use, though most consist of up-dated versions of the books in use in 2013.

¹⁴⁹ Kresimir Erdelja and Igor Stojakovic, *Tragom Proslasti 8*, 2nd edition, Skolska knjiga, 2009.

¹⁵⁰ For data of the use of the 4 books: Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, “Postotna zastupljenost udžbenika i pripadajućih dopunskih nastavni sredstava”, data from school year 2010/11.

¹⁵¹ Stjepan Bekavac and Mario Jareb, *Povijest 8*, 2nd edition, Alfa, 2009.

¹⁵² Snjezana Koren, *Povijest 8*, 3rd edition, Profil, 2009.

¹⁵³ Vesna Djuric, *Povijest*, 3rd edition, Profil, 2009.

¹⁵⁴ ESI Interview with Kresimir Erdelja, 19 March 2013.

Mario Jareb, a historian born in 1969, defined the role of textbook authors as “translators” of the findings of historians, who create a “window to the world to help students develop a critical attitude towards what is written here.”¹⁵⁵ Snjezana Koren, lecturer on history pedagogy at Zagreb University born in 1965, told ESI that her inspiration to write her first textbook came from looking at British books at the British Council office in the 1990s; books which “had a lot of critical questions, asking pupils to think and not merely to reproduce facts.”¹⁵⁶

Looking closer at the content of these books, it is remarkable how much they all differed from the book of Ivo Peric that was used in the 1990s.

All books note that most Croats initially welcomed the formation of the NDH – the Ustasha state allied to Hitler’s Germany. All describe how the Ustasha regime pursued the goal of a national homeland exclusively for Croats. Book I (ER) refers to “Ustasha terror against Serbs, Jews and Roma,” Book II (JA) to “persecution and mass killings of the Serbian population,” Book III (KO) to “genocide of Serbs, Jews and Roma” and Book IV (DJ) to the “persecution of Serbs.” All mention the racial laws and note that Jews had to wear a yellow star, suffered from expropriations and imprisonment and were murdered in concentration camps. All four books describe Jasenovac, the largest Croatian concentration camp where Serbs, Jews, Roma and antifascist Croats were killed. They put the numbers of those killed at Jasenovac at 60-100,000 (Book I), 72,000 (Book II), 80-100,000 (Book III) and “tens and tens of thousands” (Book IV). These figures are consistent with those given by the US holocaust museum and international historians.

All four books describe the killings committed at the end of the Second World War in Bleiburg and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, where communist partisans killed many Croat prisoners. Tens of thousands of Croats lost their lives – according to Book II (JA) some 70,000. This is the same number given by historian Keith Lowe in his book “Savage Continent.” There he describes how the partisans killed 70,000 people in the days immediately following the end of the Second World War.¹⁵⁷ Lowe also quotes a senior partisan leader at the time, Milovan Djilas, who explained to a British magazine in 1979 that there was no way to investigate so many people: “so the easy way out was to have them all shot, and have done with the problem.”¹⁵⁸

The narrative about the 1990s is also similar in all four books, although the emphasis given to various events differs. Each text refers to the two military offensives of 1995, “Flash” and “Storm,” in which the Croatian army regained control over most of the occupied territories. All books note that most Serbs of these areas fled to Bosnia or Serbia. Book I notes that the Yugoslav Army sided with the rebels, but does not refer to them as “aggressors.” Book II has a six-page chapter on the “Greater Serbian aggression against Croatia” and describes the goal of the “Serbian aggressor” as annexing large parts of Croatia. Book III avoids the word “aggression.” As its author Snjezana Koren told ESI: “In my textbook, you can rarely find the word ‘aggression’. I think it is an aggressive term. I prefer explanations instead of tagging.”¹⁵⁹

There are more differences of emphasis between the four books. Book I (Erdelj) has four pages about the Jasenovac concentration camp and two about the post-war killings at Bleiburg. Book II (Jareb) has two pages about Jasenovac and four about Bleiburg. Book II by Jareb has almost nine pages on the war in 1995. There are many photographs, maps and short portraits of war

¹⁵⁵ ESI Interview with Mario Jareb, 13 March 2013.

¹⁵⁶ ESI Interview with Snjezana Koren, 29 January 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent*, Penguin, 2013, p. 262.

¹⁵⁸ Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent*, Penguin, 2013, p. 264.

¹⁵⁹ ESI interview with Snjezana Koren, 18 March 2013.

heroes. It lists both Croat and Serb casualties: “The number of victims on the Serb side is estimated at 1,200 soldiers and civilians, fallen and killed during and after the operation.”¹⁶⁰ It noted that Croatia fought a “defensive liberation war” and that both operations, “Flash” and “Storm,” were legitimate. Jareb’s co-author explained to ESI: “Our goal was to ensure that no one has doubts about the fact that some members of the Croatian army committed crimes.”¹⁶¹ The book gives specific examples of atrocities committed against Serbs:

“Against the backdrop of the violent Serbian attack on Croatia, some members of regular Croatian forces also committed crimes. In 1991, individual citizens of Serb ethnicity were killed in Gospic, Osijek and Sisak, mainly in revenge or for personal gain. Other places of retaliation were Pakracka Poljana and Paulin Dvor in 1991 and Medacki Dzep [Medak pocket] in 1993.

Events following operation Storm have also attracted attention. The case of the Lora prison shows that some captured members of Serbian forces were abused and tortured in Croatian jails. The Croatian judiciary has conducted, or is still conducting, criminal proceedings against the perpetrators of the mentioned crimes.”¹⁶²

The coverage of the war in these books is thus similar to the findings of the judgements of the ICTY.

Book IV stands out by devoting only one and a half pages to the war. The text is short and often vague: “in summer 1991 military actions of larger scale with the aim of destroying the Croatian state began.” There are only 16 lines on the 1995 offensives. This is the only book that does not mention crimes against Serbs in 1995.

None of the books devotes much attention to Franjo Tudjman. Book I has two pictures of him. It gives him credit for leading Croatia to independence and for establishing control over its territory. The rest of his legacy is portrayed negatively: shady privatisations, an “autocratic style of governance, questionable independence of courts, and control of media.” Book II underlines that Tudjman was imprisoned in Yugoslav times for his defence of “Croatian interests” and that he worked to remove the collective guilt of Croats related to the “overblown” numbers of victims in Jasenovac. “Together with the homeland defenders,” according to the authors, “he deserves gratitude for the creation of an independent and sovereign Croatia.”

In Book III, there is one photograph of Tudjman and a box with eight lines. It explains that Croatia reached independence “during his time” and that independence and victory in the war secured him initially “great popularity”. But later, Koren’s book notes, his “authoritarian rule” triggered “a wave of dissatisfaction among many citizens.” Book IV mentions Tudjman in passing as the first president of independent Croatia. It refers to his unsuccessful negotiations with Milosevic. Otherwise, there is only one photo of him, whose caption says: “Franjo Tudjman (1922-1999), general, historian and the first Croatian president.”

Some of the authors criticised each other’s books. Stjepan Bekavac, co-author of Book II, recalls that

“Koren [*author of Book III*] was bothered that we wrote that in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) ‘repression’ against Jews, Serbs and others was huge. She said that

¹⁶⁰ The Serbian documentation centre Veritas puts the number of dead or missing Serbs due to Operation Storm at 1,186 civilians and 642 soldiers. See www.veritas.org.rs/spiskovi.

¹⁶¹ ESI interview with Stjepan Bekavac, 13 March 2013.

¹⁶² Stjepan Bekavac and Mario Jareb, *Povijest 8*, Alfa, 2009, p. 213.

‘repression’ is too mild a word. But look at the dictionary ... Furthermore, we clearly wrote that they were persecuted, tortured, murdered *en masse* and that all of their rights were revoked.”¹⁶³

Koren, author of Book III, objected to some of the ways in which Book II presented the war:

“They have portraits of war heroes, which, if you compare the wording, are similar to the way the [partisan] heroes were once described. Pride, fame, honor, patriotism – it is the same vocabulary.”¹⁶⁴

Jareb, co-author of Book II, was in turn critical of Koren’s use of concepts:

“She avoided saying that Croatia was occupied. She wrote that the Croatian Army ‘took control of a territory (Krajina), as if she’s talking about the war in Afghanistan or Vietnam.”¹⁶⁵

There is also one striking omission in all four books: the role of Croatia in the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ICTY has sentenced 17 Bosnian Croats for war crimes.¹⁶⁶ It found that “troops of the Croatian Army fought alongside the HVO [Army of Bosnian Croats] against the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the Republic of Croatia had overall control over the armed forces and the civilian authorities of the Croatian Community (and later Republic) of Herceg-Bosna.”¹⁶⁷ It put on trial a large number of Bosnian Croat leaders for atrocities, torture, and participation in a joint criminal enterprise directed against Muslims and other non-Croats “in order to remove them permanently and to create a Croatian territory with the borders of the Croatian Banovina.”¹⁶⁸

While all books devote one or two pages to the Bosnian war, none has more than two sentences on the conflict between Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). Koren states that “the Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina enjoyed the help and support from the authorities in Zagreb.” None of the books critically examines Zagreb’s support for Bosnian Croat leaders who were later sentenced for war crimes. None refers to the 1993 massacre by Bosnian Croat forces of more than 100 civilians in the village of Ahmici in Central Bosnia, which prompted Croatian president Ivo Josipovic to express his regrets when he visited the village, and to tell the Bosnian parliament in Sarajevo in April 2010:

“I deeply regret that the Republic of Croatia with its policies of the 1990s contributed to that as well. I deeply regret that such a Croatian policy contributed to the suffering of people and to divisions that trouble us still today.”¹⁶⁹

This is an obvious blind spot in the history of the recent wars taught in Croatian schools. If not addressed, it is likely to influence future relations between Croatia and its neighbour.

¹⁶³ ESI interview with Stjepan Bekavac, 13 March 2013. Koren’s comment must refer to p. 101 of Bekavac & Jareb’s book.

¹⁶⁴ ESI interview with Snjezana Koren, 18 March 2013.

¹⁶⁵ ESI interview with Mario Jareb, 13 March 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Source: ICTY, “The cases”, www.icty.org. As of 21 August 2015, one case with 6 defendants is still pending before the appeals chamber.

¹⁶⁷ ICTY, [IT-04-74 Prlic et al](#), for an overview see the case information sheet.

¹⁶⁸ ICTY, [IT-04-74 Prlic et al – Judgement Summary](#), 29 May 2013.

¹⁶⁹ *Jutarnij List*, “[Video: Josipovic se ispricao za pokusaje Hrvatske da podijeli Bosnu i Hercegovinu](#)”, 14 April 2010.

In the end, though, it is the similarities between these books – by contrast to the ideological histories of both the communist and the Tadjman eras – that are most striking. They all reflect the changes that took place in Croatia between 2000 and 2013.

ANNEX B: CROATIAN 8TH GRADE HISTORY BOOKS 1991-2013

(Books whose revised editions were in use in 2013 are highlighted bold)

- Rene Lovrencic, Ivo Jelic, Radovan Vukadinovic and Dusan Bilandzic, *Covjek u svom vremenu 4, udzbenik povijesti za VIII. razred osnovne skole*, Skolska knjiga, 1991.
- Ivo Peric, *Povijest za VIII. razred osnovne skole*, Skolska knjiga (later Alfa), 1992.
- **Snjezana Koren, *Povijest 8, Profil*, 2000.**
- **Vesna Djuric, *Povijest 8, Profil*, 2000.**
- Hrvoje Matkovic, *Povijest 8*, Skolska knjiga, 2000.
- Maja Brkljacic, Tihomir Ponos, Dario Spelic, *Povijest 8*, Skolska knjiga, 2000.
- Maja Brkljacic, Tihomir Ponos, Zdenko Samarzija and Dario Spelic, *Povijest 8*, Skolska knjiga, 2001.
- Josip Jurcevic and Marija Raic, *Povijest za 8. razred osnovne skole*, Alfa, 2004.
- **Kresimir Erdelja and Igor Stojakovic, *Tragom proslosti 8, Skolska knjiga*, 2007.**
- Mira Kolar-Dimitrijevic, Hrvoje Petric and Jaksa Raguz, *Povijest 8*, Meridijani, 2007.
- Stjepan Bekavac, Marija Bradvica and Marinko Miocic, *Povijest 8*, Alfa, 2007.
- **Stjepan Bekavac and Mario Jareb, *Povijest 8, Alfa*, 2008.**