

PREFACE

The Fourth Interdisciplinary Scientific and Professional Symposium, titled *The City of Osijek in the Defense of the Croatian East*, was by: the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb - the Regional Center of Osijek, and the following partners: the Department of Cultural Studies, the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Osijek; the Faculty of Philosophy, the University of Mostar; and the Branch of Matrix Croatica in Osijek. The Symposium, as well as the previous three Symposia (*The Croatian East in the Homeland War - Experiences, Insights and Consequences*; *The Homeland War and Its Socio-Economic Impact on the Development of the Croatian East* and *The Homeland War – Its Economic, Demographic and Social Effects and Perspectives in the Croatian East*), represents continued efforts, that the scientific, technical, cultural and other community has undertaken in order to deal with issues regarding the Homeland War and the post-war reconstruction of Croatian society in the Croatian East that has been the matter of the strategic national interest both for the homeland of Croatia and the Croatian Diaspora.

In the early beginnings of the Homeland War, it was in the Croatian East where the fiercest fighting took place, with the greatest war dynamics and the intensity of action of the Croatian Armed Forces against the part of the rebel Serbs and the Yugoslav People's Army (the JNA), resulting in the greatest military and civilian casualties. The Croatian East is located in the area where the Republic of Croatia borders directly with Serbia, thus the rebel Serbs and the JNA had an unlimited logistical support. In addition, the national structure of the population in the Croatian East, where there were Serbian enclaves (Tenja, Bobota, Vera, Pačetin, Trpinja, Bijelo Brdo and other villages), facilitated the Greater-Serbian aggression and hindered the defense activities of the Croatian authorities.

The magnificent victory in the Homeland War over the Greater-Serbian aggressor, did not mean the defeat of the concept of "Greater Serbia". It is still present and we are witnessing its recurrence in everyday life of the citizens in the Republic of Croatia and in its immediate neighbourhood. Among the best-known recurrences of the idea of Greater Serbia belongs certainly the Documentation Information Center *Veritas* seated in Belgrade and having the branch office in Banja Luka, where the truth about the Homeland War has obviously been falsified. Another Greater-Serbian project of recent time and, perhaps, it is the most important project, is the Law on the Organization and Jurisdiction of Government Authorities in Prosecuting Persons Guilty of War Crimes, colloquially known as the Law on Universal Jurisdiction. In this Law, the Republic of Serbia explicitly declared itself to be solely in authority to conduct trials for the "serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since January 1st, 1991, regardless of the nation-

ality of the perpetrator or of the victim. This Law and its application are in conflict with the fundamental principles of the UN Charter being the basis of the relations between sovereign states. Furthermore, the Law is in conflict with the basic principles of international public law, international criminal and criminal procedural law, as well as the fundamental principles of the European Union formation and functioning.

Part of the political scene in Croatia who had directly and indirectly flirted with the Milošević's regim during the Homeland War, although being financed by the Croatian budgetary funds, is continuously stigmatizing the Homeland War, the Croatian defenders and the official policy of the government. They have been assigning them political attributions which seek to discredit them before the international legal and political factors. These revisionists of the Croatian history, especially of the part that refers to the Homeland War, have created a viable ethno-business for themselves by using these false accusations.

The last year Symposium of the 30th Jnuary, attempted to give some complete or some partial answers to certain issues that have been partially or completely unknown to the scientific and general public. These issues refer to the city of Osijek as the main stronghold in the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia in the Croatian East. In terms of content, the Symposium represents the continuation of the previous three Symposia. This year there were twenty-six scientists of different scientific profiles participating, such as prominent doctors, theologians, lawyers, historians, economists, humanitarian activists, university and high school teachers and so on. During the one-day Symposium, the participants presented thirty papers to the public, regarding the fields of: theology, education, culture, anthropology, medicine, history, military tactics and doctrine, law, sociology, economic, political science and humanitarian action.

The fourth Symposium, as well as the previous ones, is dedicated to the veterans of the Homeland War, as well as to all the patriots and the martyrs who lost their lives, were persecuted, imprisoned and harassed fighting for the identity and the survival of the Croatian people in the course of thirteen-century-long Croatian history. Likewise, the Symposium is also dedicated to every person, who was not a member of the Croatian national corpus but fell victim in the Homeland War. Therefore, I extend my special gratitude to this group of Croatian citizens for everything they had done for the identity and viability of our only and beloved Homeland.

During the four-year long problematisation of the issues referring to the Homeland War in the area of the Croatian East, there were 182 participants and 120 topics. This year Symposium was a concluding one in the present organisational form, with the aforementioned co-organizers. I sincerely hope that some of the scientists and scientific-research institutions will have the motives and the financial resources to con-

tinue with the work started. I am of the opinion that each and every event and each and every individual destiny of the Homeland War should be documented precisely and these data should be made accessible to the public because it is the history that is the best teacher of life. A famous Cicero's saying teaches us that: *Historia (est) testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis*. (History is the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, the voice of the old.)

In fine, I express my gratitude to all those who helped me by co-operating on these projects that will represent a small piece for the creation of the historic mosaic of the Homeland War in the area of the Croatian East.

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