

PREFACE

The Interdisciplinary Scientific and Professional Symposium: *PODRAVSKA SLATINA IN THE HOMELAND WAR* was organized by the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar – Osijek Regional Center and the Croatian Reserve Officers' Association of the town of Slatina. The Symposium took place on the 12th December, 2019 in Slatina, as part of the celebration of the 28th anniversary of the liberation of Slatina area from the Serb rebels and the Yugoslav People's Army (further YPA).

Greater Serbia is a colloquial name of a nationalist and irredentist project launched by a part of Serbian radical intelligence, that originated in the early 19th century. Historians agree without any doubt that the *spiritus movens* or *spiritus agens* of the Greater Serbian project was Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. However, the Greater Serbian project has its roots in the Middle Ages, and its first signs occurred after the Peć Patriarchate had been re-established by the *berate* (commands) of Sultan Selim II. in 1557. Afterwards, the Orthodox clergy began to promote the idea of re-establishing the Dušan Empire within its former historical borders that had covered the territories of the current states: the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Montenegro, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, Greece and the Republic of Albania. Thus, the Dušan Empire never covered the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and this fact has been deliberately overlooked by the Greater Serbian historiographers, especially by the creators of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU).

The area of the former Municipality of Podravska Slatina was located in the Northwest of Slavonia, extending partly to the Drava plain and the northern slopes of the Papuk Mountain. It is bordered in the East by the rivers of Vojlovica and Voćinka, in the North by the Drava river, in the West by the Breznica river and in the South by the peaks of the Papuk mountain. The area of Podravska Slatina borders to the North with the Republic of Hungary, to the Northwest with the Virovitica area, to the Southwest with the Daruvar area, to the South with the Požega area, to the East with the Orahovica area and to the Northeast with the Donji Miholjac area.

The former Municipality of Podravska Slatina covered an area of 781 km² and consisted of the municipal center of Podravska Slatina and 69 settlements. In the lower part there were two significant communication ways, the Podravina Railway and the Podravina Roadway, which had been of vital importance during the Homeland War, especially during the aggressive blockade of the Highway Zagreb – Belgrade near Okučani.

The southern parts of the Slatina area are hilly and forested, and in the North lies the Podravina plain. The hilly part includes many northern slopes and the peaks of

the Papuk mountain, mostly covered with deciduous forests, tame valleys and plateaus suitable for agricultural activity. The lowlands of this area lie on the right bank of the Drava river. There are arable fields and meadows, intersected by small sites of lowland oak and ash forests.

The area of the former Municipality of Podravska Slatina was geographically divided into two parts, colloquially called: Brđanska, the hill part and Podravina, the lowland part. Brđanska was mostly populated by Serbs and Podravina was predominantly populated by Croats. According to the census of 1991 there were 15 445 people living in this area, of which 9 219 (59,6 %) were Croats; 4 948 (32 %) were Serbs and 1 278 (8,3 %) were others. Serbs were dominant in Brđanska, where there were 3 262 people of Serbian nationality, 668 Croats and 222 other citizens. Brđanska had been systematically inhabited by the Serbian population, especially after the Second World War, when Bosnian Serbs from the Kotor Varoš area were settled in Voćin, Macute and Čeralije. There is a reasonable doubt that these persons were the amnestied members of the Chetnik movement, who had joined the partisan units. It is rather significant that the majority of this Serbian population, e.g. the Serbian newcomers from Bosnia and Herzegovina together with their family members, actively supported the armed rebellion in the Slatina area.

This geographical locality represented the marginal area of the so-called Greater Serbia. Namely, it borders to the Virovitica area, where Serb extremists and separatists had drawn the western border of the so-called Greater Serbia on the line Virovitica – Karlovac – Karlobag. The border of this para-statal structure was confirmed in the words of Army General Veljko Kadijević, the highest-ranking officer of the YPA (the Yugoslav People's Army) and the then Secretary (Minister) for the SFRY-national defense, who stated in the early 1990s: „The attack directions of the main forces of YPA should be connected as directly as possible with the liberated areas with the Serb population in Croatia and with the YPA garnisons in the depth of the Croatian territory. In this sense Croatia should be cut through in the directions of: Gradiška – Virovitica, Bihać – Karlovac – Zagreb, Knin – Zadar, Mostar – Split.“

Besides the book *Slatinska kronika Domovinskog rata*, the Interdisciplinary Scientific and Professional Symposium *PODRAVSKA SLATINA IN THE HOMELAND WAR* represents the first systematic scientific and professional research of the Homeland War in the Slatina area. The citizens of Slatina and the surrounding municipalities have consensually supported the organization and holding of the above mentioned scientific and professional manifestation. In the course of one day, the topics regarding the Homeland War were problematized and the scientists and other socio-political workers tried to answer certain questions that had not yet been discussed in a systematic scientific and professional debate. The answers to these questions are well de-

served by the volunteer-defenders, the disabled, the widows, the parents and the children of the fallen and missing veterans, as well as any other patriot who has lived to the centuries-old Croatian dream, namely the one of the independent, sovereign and democratic Republic of Croatia. A wide range of scientific and professional topics were presented *in facto* and *sine ira et studio*, as the ancient roman historian Tacitus had done in the *Annals*. The participants of this Symposium are of the opinion that every event and individual destiny of the Homeland War should be carefully elaborated and made available to the public because history is the best teacher. Cicero's saying is well known to us: *Historia (est) testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis*. (History is the witness to the times, the light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, the messenger of the ancient times.)

This Symposium was dedicated to the veterans of the Homeland War, to the sufferers and victims, as well as to all the patriots and the martyrs who lost their lives, were persecuted, imprisoned and harassed while fighting for the identity and the survival of the Croatian people in the course of the thirteen-century long Croatian history. The Symposium was also dedicated to every person, who was not a member of the Croatian national corpus but fell victim in the Homeland War.

In fine, on behalf of the Program and Organisation Committee, I would like to express my gratitude to all the people and social subjects who helped to realize this extremely valuable project of The Interdisciplinary Scientific and Professional Symposium: *PODRAVSKA SLATINA IN THE HOMELAND WAR*. I express special gratitude to the Ministry of Croatian Veterans' Affairs, to the Town of Slatina, to the Municipalities of Čađavica, Mikleuš, Nova Bukovica, Sopje and Voćin.

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