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DID MILE BUDAK PRESENT THE STATE AGENDA AGAINST THE SERBS OR IT WAS SERBIAN PROPAGANDA?

Abstract: The new interpretations of the Independent State of Croatia and of its state policy of crimes against the Serbian people have provided revisionism in Croatian historiography certain support by a number of historians outside the Balkan states who have become involved in discussion of the topic. One of their theses has been to deny that the Ustasha movement had any criminal plans against the Serbs. This paper is aimed at contesting such claims, with the example of a speech by one of the Ustasha ideologists – Mile Budak – about the extermination, expulsion and conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Roman Catholicism in order to create a mono-ethnic Croatian state.

Key words: Mile Budak, crime, Serbs, killing, religious conversion, expulsion

Revisionism is not a local, Balkan phenomenon. It is evident, for example, in the attempts of German historiography to relocate the real causes of World War One away from the Germanic (Austro-Hungarian and German) policy embedded in the “Drang nach Osten” (Drive to the East) programme of expansion into Slavic lands, and to shift the blame onto Russia (and the Serbs)!

It is not easy to establish the reasons which led to the new, radical, revisionist interpretations of specific events from the period of World War Two, in particular of the role of certain individuals, in relation to past more or less general knowledge.

There were many reasons why the complex history of the Independent State of Croatia (10 April 1941 – 15 May 1945) had never been clarified in communist Yugoslavia. The weakening of the concept of the unitary state and orientation towards the confederate form, enacted through the 1974 Constitution, inevitably resulted in the disintegration of that (it might be said) artificial union of republics and provinces. In this process, which lasted for several decades, a special place was given to the new interpretation of the past, especially of the Croatian Ustasha state.

The Independent State of Croatia perpetrated a state crime against the Serbs, that is, against more than a third of its population, following the Nazi German model for the extermination of its Jewish and Roma population. The scale of the crime was so high that it established the split between the Croats and Serbs for good, which has been further intensified by Croat revisionism.

The new “reading” (interpretation) of the history of the Independent State of Croatia has also been carried out, among other ways, through master and doctoral theses from countries ranging from New Zealand to Canada, presented in various languages, though most often in English and German. Thanks to the new internet technology, all of these theses are easy to access and comment on. One of the common characteristics of many of them is the different from established point of view of the Independent State of Croatia and of the large-scale crimes

perpetrated throughout its territory, followed by a lack of interpretations of the important but dishonest role played by the Roman Catholic Church.

At some time in the past, the Croatian leader Franjo Tuđman set out the thesis in his book “The Wilderness of Historical Reality” that modern Croatia was supposed to reject the bloody traces of the Independent State of Croatia, by discarding the general facts about the key events relating to the Serbian and, to a certain extent, Croatian peoples. About what happened in Jadovno, Jasenovac and Bleiburg, for instance! Rather than an open invitation to revisionism, it became the Croatian political strategy! At the same time, let it be said in plain English, it has meant that those Ustasha members who had committed crimes in Jasenovac should be transformed, in a specific way, into victims – we refer to the Ustasha members fleeing Yugoslavia but who were mostly executed in Bleiburg –, for which the Partisan movement was to be blamed. Therefore, the intention of this paper is to show this process as regards the case of the work of Mile Budak, one of the chief ideologists of the Ustasha movement and the inspirer of crimes, who was executed in Zagreb in 1945, after a short court trial, by the Communist Partisan authorities.

A German historian (temporarily working in England), Alexander Korb, defended his doctoral thesis under the title “Im Schatten des Weltkriegs. Maseengewalt der Ustaša gegen Kroatien, 1941–45”, (“In the Shadow of World Wars: Ustasha Mass Violence against Serbs, Jews and Roma in Croatia 1941–45”, Hamburg, Germany, available on the Internet); the work was given several awards, and was published in different languages, including Croatian.¹

Understandably, Korb was interesting to the Croatian media, and several interviews with him were published, both in the press and on the internet. In one of these interviews, he said that no genocide was committed against the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia, and continued to the effect that there was no evidence that Mile Budak, Minister of Education and Religion, expounded in one of his speeches the Ustasha policy towards the Serbs: “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats!”² Korb’s dissertation was also awarded a prize by a certain German foundation, Žikić Stiftung, naming its award after the prominent Yugoslav historian Andrej Mitrović.³

In Korb’s dissertation, Mile Budak is mentioned on the following pages: 35, 61, 78, 79, 103, 111, 207, 268, 390 and 400. Rather than Budak’s speeches, these pages reveal something else: on page 35, Korb maintains out that Serbian propaganda influenced the content of German reports in which negative reviews of the Ustasha state were corroborated by the mention of the large-scale crimes perpetrated!

In an interview with Robert Bajruši, a journalist of the Zagreb Jutarnji List, published under the title “A German historian and one of the leading experts in the history of the ISC (Independent State of Croatia): This is the truth about the number of people killed in Jasenovac” (it was posted on the Internet on 20 May 2018), the journalist concluded: “However, in your book, you

¹ The book review (in German) was published by Zrinka Miljan on the internet portal www.historiografija.hr.

² Gojko Borić, “Inozemni glasovi o NDH i ustaštvu puni izmišljotina, ali i...”, (“Foreign news on the Independent State of Croatia and Ustasha movement are full of lies, but also...”), www.hkv.hr/hrvatski-tjednik/

³ At the request of Prix Foundation Auschwitz, on 25 May 2011, Prof. Dr. Boško Bojović wrote a review on Korb’s dissertation, which affected the Foundation’s decision not to award the prize. Boško Bojović, “Izveštaj o čitanju”, Godišnjak za istraživanje genocida, (“Reading Report”, Yearbook for Genocide Research), Museum of Victims of Genocide, Kragujevac–Belgrade 2019, 169–188.

state that there was no genocide against the Serbs in the ISC, because no document proves that there was a clearly defined masterplan, like in Germany towards the Jews?" The German historian replied: "It is important to define what genocide means. It is not to be disputed that the Ustasha tried to exterminate Serbs living in the ISC, but at the same time there is no evidence that there was a master plan for the systematic liquidation of the Serbian population in that country. Genocide includes the concept of the destruction of a group, but the Ustasha often, both at the central and local levels, exercised mass violence without any plan. Yugoslav historiography has claimed that there was a Ustasha plan for genocide, which does not seem to be right, because the violence and killings were often random and unorganized, taking place in some parts of the ISC, and not elsewhere."

Korb's claim that the Ustasha had no masterplan for the extermination of the Serbian, Jewish and Roma minorities in the Independent State of Croatia is "useful" for Croatian historiography and especially for those who try to revise generally accepted interpretations of tragic events, such as those in Jasenovac. But Korb's claim is, at the very least, incorrect, because there is a lot of evidence that there was a masterplan not only for the extermination of the aforementioned minorities, but also of those who did not support such Ustasha policies and the movement itself. To get acquainted with them, the books published in Communist Yugoslavia by Šime Balen⁴ (formerly member of the Croatian Peasant's Party, then of the Ustasha and eventually of the Communist Party), Fikreta Jelić Butić⁵ and Bogdan Krizman⁶ on the Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić and his followers, as well as the book published in Croatia by Mario Jareb⁷, are strongly recommended.

Mile Budak (30 August 1889, Sveti Rok, District of Gračac, County of Lika-Krbavica, Austria-Hungary – 7 June 1945⁸, Zagreb, Yugoslavia) had a turbulent life: he was a soldier, a prisoner of war, a convict in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a lawyer, a writer, one of the chief ideologists of the Ustasha movement, a newspaper editor, a senior official in the Independent State of Croatia and eventually a convict in Partisan Yugoslavia.

As a soldier of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Budak fought on the front in Serbia in 1914, where he was wounded and afterwards captured near Valjevo on 12 November. As a prisoner of war, he withdrew with the Serbian Army across Albania and was then deported to the prison camp at Asinari, an island near Sardinia in Italy. He returned from captivity in mid-1919 and

⁴ Šime Balen, *Pavelić*, Zagreb 1956.

⁵ Fikreta Jelić Butić, *Ustaše i NDH*, Zagreb 1978. (The Ustasha and the Independent State of Croatia).

⁶ Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*, Zagreb 1986 (Ante Pavelić and the Ustasha); *NDH između Hitlera i Musolinija*, Zagreb 1986 (The ISC between Hitler and Mussolini); *Ustaše i Treći Rajh*, I–II, Zagreb 1983 (The Ustasha and the Third Reich).

⁷ Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret od nastanka do travnja 1941. godine*, Zagreb 2006. (The Ustasha-Home Guard movement from the establishment to April 1941).

⁸ According to official information, Mile Budak was executed on 7 June in Zagreb. However, Croatian historians and publicists disagree on the exact date of the execution. In his biography, presented in the Croatian Biographical Lexicon (Miroslav Krleža Lexicographical Institute) on the Internet, the date of death is "6 or 7 June 1945". In the Biographical Lexicon "Who's Who in the ISC. Croatia 1941–1945" (Zagreb 1997, pp. 53–55) it is written that Budak was killed on 7 June 1946. In his book *Pavelić u bjekstvu (Pavelić in flight)*, Zagreb 1986, p. 26, Bogdan Krizman states that the sentence was carried out on 7 June 1945. Jure Krišto offers two dates: in his work *Katolička crkva i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941–1945 (The Catholic Church and the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945)*, I, Zagreb 1998, p. 88, the date is 5 May 1945, while in another work, *Sukob simbola. Politika, vjere i ideologije u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj (Clash of Symbols. Politics, religions and ideologies in the Independent State of Croatia)*, Zagreb 2001, p. 25, he mentions 7 May 1945.

continued his law studies in Zagreb, where he also received his doctorate. He worked as a trainee in Dr. Ante Pavelić's law firm; in 1925 he defended the communist Vladimir Čopić in court.

The political activities he engaged in as one of the leaders of the Croatian Party of Rights resulted in his arrest at the end of October 1929 and a sentence to seven months of imprisonment. After an assassination attack on him in Zagreb, in early February 1933 he fled Yugoslavia, first to Austria and then to Italy. In Italy he joined the Ustasha movement (Croatian Revolutionary Organization) of Ante Pavelić, who appointed him his deputy at the beginning of May 1934.⁹ In the years following, he was chief editor of the Ustasha newspaper "Independent Croatian State", and published articles and treatises.

In 1934, in Philadelphia, United States, Budak published a booklet entitled "Croatian People in the Fight for Independence and an Independent Croatian State". The year before this, he published several poems, among which "Titan Mountains" (better known as the Ustaša march "Run, dogs, over the Drina!"), stands out as Ustasha "agenda", and refers to the so-called Velebit Uprising of 1932. The second and fourth verses read as follows:

The hero by name of Ante,
Thunders from the heights,
The trumpet of God's justice:
Run, dogs, over the Drina!

From Velebit Ante calls,
Heads up, guns are shouting:
Run, dogs, over the Drina
The Croats fight for their home!

After the agreement signed on 25 March 1937 between the Yugoslav Prime and Foreign Minister Milan Stojadinović and Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, and the meeting with Stojadinović in mid-June 1938, Mile Budak returned to Yugoslavia, to Zagreb, where he continued to expand the Ustasha movement.¹⁰ Following the course of these activities, he started the newspapers "Hrvatski narod" (Croatian people), legally printed in Zagreb. However, his text against the policies of Vladko Maček and the Croatian Peasant Party provoked the authorities, which had him arrested on 27 February 1940, but released on 11 April.¹¹

When the Independent State of Croatia was declared on 10 April 1941, Budak was in Zagreb. On 16 April, Poglavnik Ante Pavelić appointed him Minister of Education and Religion in the first Government of the newly established state.

The Ustasha policy towards the Serbs in the future independent Croatia was formulated and proclaimed as early as 1936 by Ante Pavelić in his manifesto "The Croat Question", published

⁹ Ante Pavelić, *Doživljaji (Experiences)*, Zagreb 2015. In his diary entries, Krunoslav Draganović noted that Pavelić had sexual intercourse with Budak's wife. Private archive.

¹⁰ Budak was amigrant for five years, five months and five days. Tomislav Jonjić, Stjepan Matković, „Novi prilozi za životopis Mile Budaka”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 2, Zagreb 2008, 425–453. (“New contributions for Mile Budak's biography”, Magazine for contemporary history).

¹¹ M. Jareb, op. cit.

in German as a special memorandum for German politicians. It was not before 1942 that it was published in Croatian, in Zagreb.¹²

The implementation of such a policy began on 10 April 1941, following the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia.¹³ The campaign against the Serbs was intensified during May and June through the press and mass gatherings of the people throughout the new state, at which the Ustasha leaders gave their speeches. According to the news reports, more than 30 gatherings, with more than 40 speakers, were organized from the end of May to mid-June 1941.¹⁴ The number of mass gatherings that had been held by the end of August was, however, much higher, as was confirmed by the Zagreb press reports.

Among those parts of the state visited by the Ustasha leaders, Lika was accorded a special place. Understandably, because many of the leaders were born there. Mile Budak, Minister of Education and Religion, the field of whose activities also included propaganda, delivered his speeches most often there, accusing the Serbs and suggesting harsh consequences for them.

According to one of his biographers, Budak had for years expressed anti-Serb, anti-Communist and anti-Semitic attitudes: “His previously to a certain extent hidden anti-Serb, anti-Communist and anti-Semitic propaganda, published in newspapers such as “Mlada Hrvatska” (Young Croatia), “Hrvatsko pravo” (Croatian Law), “Pravaš” (Member of Croatian Party of Rights) and “Hrvatski narod” (Croatian people), continued into the second half of 1941 with a series of speeches on Radio Zagreb as well as in Central, Northwestern and Northern Croatia, printed either partially or in the whole in the Ustasha newspapers of the time.”¹⁵

Another biographer, in the newspaper feuilleton “Mile Budak – A Portrait of a Politician”, published in the daily news “Slobodna Dalmacija” (it can be found on the Internet under this title), claims: “Budak showed an extreme radicalism, racism and intolerance in his political appearances from the end of May to mid-August 1941, when he held a series of inflammatory anti-Serbian speeches, justifying reprisals against them; Ante Pavelić was behind that campaign. During the campaign, Budak spoke every Sunday (except one) in different towns throughout Croatia. Budak’s political appearances were intended to achieve a certain political effect among the Croatian population and, at the same time, to intimidate Serbs.”¹⁶

It is difficult to say in a few sentences what the Serbian people experienced during the first year of the existence of the Independent State of Croatia. Perhaps this was most accurately described by Croatian historian Fikreta Jelić Butić: “The political campaign of the leading Ustashes against the Serbs was in the proper sense of the word a public call for the implementation of a

¹² *Ustaša Dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (pripredio Petar Požar), Zagreb 1995, 95–109. (The Ustasha. Documents on the Ustasha movement).

¹³ Nevenko Bartulin, *The ideology of nation and race: The Croatian Ustasha regime and its policies toward minorities in the Independent State of Croatia*: doctoral thesis at New South Wales University, 2006. Significantly shorter version: Nevenko Bartulin, „Ideologija nacije i rase: ustaški režim i politika prema Srbima u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj 1941–1945”, *RADOVI – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest*, 39, Zagreb 2007, pp. 209–242.

¹⁴ Vjekoslav Vrančić, *Branili smo državu. Uspomene, osvrti, doživljaji*, 1, Barcelona–München 1985, p. 323. (We defended the state. Memories, reviews, experiences).

¹⁵ Internet portal of the Croatian Biographical Lexicon, Lexicographical Institute “Miroslav Krleža”, entry BUDAK, MILE.

¹⁶ Mile Budak, among other towns, delivered his speeches in Križevci on 6 June (Hrvatski narod, 7 June 1941), Karlovac on 13 June (Hrvatski narod, 14 June 1941), Slavonski Brod on 15 June (Hrvatski narod, 16 June 1941), Vukovar on 8 July (Hrvatski narod, 9 July 1941), Pakrac on 20 July (Hrvatski narod, 21 July 1941), Gornje Kosiñje in Lika on 29 July (Hrvatski narod, 30 July 1941), and Ivanac on 3 August (Hrvatski narod, 4 August 1941). See also Budak’s interviews published in the same newspaper on 27 May and 7 July 1941.

concrete policy towards the Serbian population and, at the same time, confirmation and justification of terror, which demonstrated its monstrous features in a very short period. The terror that had been exercised over the Serbs until then was only given more impetus. All this shows that the terror against the Serbs in the ISC had turned into a true system of genocide.”¹⁷

It would be both exhausting and horrifying to quote all the claims of the Ustasha leaders against the Serbs at these mass gatherings. Most of these speeches were published in the Croatian press, making them available for research. However, some researchers find several speeches questionable, despite the fact that they have been considered authentic for almost seven decades. The first example might be the speech of Minister Mile Budak in 1941, when he presented the Ustasha state agenda against the Serbian people in the Independent State of Croatia, unambiguously pointing out their intention to exterminate, expel or convert Serbs to Roman Catholicism.

However, as the agenda against the Serbian people had been executed from 1941 to 1945 and eventually completed in August 1995, the question of the authenticity of Budak’s speech seems to be irrelevant. One of the reasons for dealing with it may be as follows: the project of the establishment of the Croatian nation, initiated by the religious conversion of the Orthodox Serbs to Roman Catholicism and the construction of its past, continued with the enforcing of Croatian separatism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, followed by the terrifying crimes committed in the Independent State of Croatia and concluded in August 1995 when the idea of a Croatia without the Serbs came into existence! This was a long-term process, from which Serbs must derive an understanding of the patterns of history in order not to allow something similar happen to them again (which, unfortunately, is happening in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija)!

Historiography has its own rules, which we shall adhere to. In this context, we shall try to present the relevant facts in an effort to corroborate, on the one hand, and challenge, on the other, the contrasting claims referring to the authenticity of the said speech. Such a task is not easy and requires the clarification of three key details for its accomplishment: the place, the time, and what was said!

As an experienced historian, I began the research with the newspapers printed in the first months of the newly-proclaimed Independent State of Croatia. Although it was conducted carefully, the research did not reveal any news items about Budak’s speech in Gospić. What was found, however, were reports on his speeches at other mass gatherings, as well as on the speeches given by other Ustasha ministers and leaders.

According to the news reports, the speakers were simply competing as to who could suggest the most brutal methods for “resolving” the Serbian question. Almost all the information about this was compiled in Viktor Novak’s *Magnum Crimen*, Belgrade 1986.

Novak claims: “At the mass gathering in Gospić, the fanatic Ustasha Mile Budak clarified and unambiguously demonstrated the Ustashes’ way of resolving the question of the extermination of the Serbs. He said: “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats...”¹⁸ For the sake of the truth, in

¹⁷ Fikreta Jelić Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj 1941–1945* (The Chetniks in Croatia 1941–1945), Zagreb 1986, p. 29.

¹⁸ Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen*, Belgrade 1986, p. 605.

quoting these words Novak did not refer to any source, as he did in some other cases. However, he could have, had he wanted!

At the same time, Sima Simić, a close associate of Victor Novak, and the author of a few noteworthy works on the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican, cited several of Budak's speeches, but did not mention Gospić.¹⁹

Those familiar with the work of Djura Vilović, a former Roman Catholic priest, know that during the war he was collecting materials about the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in crimes against the Serbian people in the Independent State of Croatia, for his book "Krvava crkva" (Bloody Church), but it was not published in his lifetime. On the basis of various facts, it can be assumed with great certainty that after St. Sava's Day in 1944 (and after the St. Sava Congress in the village of Ba, near Obrenovac), he delivered the materials collected to certain people close to the Serbian Patriarchate.

Although there are certain indications, there is no reliable evidence as to how Vilović's materials came into the possession of Novak, who used it for his *Magnum Crimen* – without, however, referring to any sources. This was understandable, given the fact that Vilović was convicted in 1946 in the case against the Chetnik leader General Dragoljub Draža Mihailović; for the following seven years, he was imprisoned in Sremska Mitrovica.

(The incomplete Vilović manuscript was prepared for publication by the author of this paper; it was printed in 2009 under the logo of the Serbian Radical Party and entitled "Krvava crkva". Mile Budak is mentioned on page 131 of this book. Unfortunately, the book ends at that page. I am firmly convinced that the authentic manuscript was much longer when I received it from the then Director of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, MA. Slobodan Mileusnić, and having read it, forwarded it to a priest in the Šabac-Valjevo Eparchy for printing. Since the manuscript was not published, however, I asked him to return it to me. I received the vague answer: "I have left it with the doorman at the Patriarchate!" Everything stopped there. I am inclined to the belief that the contents of the manuscript did not "fit into" the publishing agenda of the Šabac-Valjevo Eparchy!)

In the summer of 1941, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church established a special committee intended to collect testimonies of priests and other people about the suffering in the territories of the disintegrated Kingdom of Yugoslavia, especially in the Independent State of Croatia. It is known that, almost simultaneously and with the same task, the Commissariat for Refugees and Displaced Persons was established under the auspices of the collaborationist authorities in Serbia. The two commissions later agreed to share testimonies with the Patriarchate in order to complete the collection of materials. It was not established when the last reports were created by the Commissariat for Refugees, but it is known that they were written down in the summer of 1944. (After 1945, most of this archival material was handed over to the State Archives of Serbia, the present-day Archives of Serbia, and a part to the Archives of Yugoslavia; whilst a third part was kept by the State Security Service, where it is now.)

¹⁹ Sima Simić, *Prekrštanje Srba za vreme Drugog svetskog rata* (Conversion of Serbs during World War Two), Titograd 1958.

When, after several archbishops were received by the Military Commander of Serbia, General Ludwig Schroeder, and his associate, General Harold Turner, the Holy Synod decided on 8 July 1941 to hand over to them a memorandum on the crimes committed in the Independent State of Croatia, a team of experts was formed to draft it. Although the memorandum was completed on 20 July, it was not handed over to General Schroeder, as he was seriously injured in a plane accident on 18 July and died shortly after.

In the following days, the Synod significantly altered the content of the memorandum and delivered it to the new Military Commander in Serbia, General Heinrich Dankelman, in mid-August.

At the present day, it is not easy to determine the German reactions to the requests of the Serbian archbishops. It is, however, known that on 15 January 1942 a third memorandum was drafted, to be sent to General Paul Bader, the subsequent Military Commander of Serbia.

The first memorandum emphasized that the data about the crimes had been collected before 20 July. Item 37 stated: “At a banquet in Gospić, Minister Dr. Mile Budak said, among other things: ‘We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats’...”

In the second memorandum, the same sentence was repeated under item 64, which was the case in the third memorandum as well.²⁰

It is known that the Germans, within the framework of their policies in the territories inhabited by the Slovenes, planned to Germanize and then deport the local population to the Independent State of Croatia and the territory of the Military Commander in Serbia. Roman Catholic priests were also included in these deportation plans. A certain number of these priests came to Serbia. It is difficult to determine who initiated the memorandum addressed to the Archbishop of Belgrade, Josip Ujčić, on 1 March 1942. The memorandum was not kept secret for long, as its content had become public in those days, as was confirmed by the study titled, “Action of the Roman Catholic Church”, prepared for the Commissariat for Refugees and Displaced Persons and the Government of Milan Nedić. The study included an integrated version of the memorandum, parts of which were used and cited by various authors – Viktor Novak, for example, in his *Magnum Crimen*: “It is well known to His Excellency that Orthodox Christians today convert en masse to the Catholic Church. At first glance, it seems that by its nature it is a matter of religion and the Church, but whoever is familiar with the real situation in Croatia is convinced that it is quite the contrary: the present-day conversion of Orthodox Christians to Roman Catholicism in the ISC has nothing to do with religion. Zagreb’s plans with this conversion of the Orthodox, have been elaborated, in perfect sincerity, by one of the most influential people in Croatia, Minister Dr. Mile Budak. He officially stated in Gospić: ‘We shall

²⁰ The first copies of the memorandum were delivered to the German occupying authorities, but it is not known what happened to them. Several copies have been preserved. The first memorandum was published by Atanasije Jevtić, *Od Kosova do Jadovna. Putni zapisi jermononaha Atanasija Jevtića* (From Kosovo to Jadovno. Travel notes of Hieromonk Atanasije Jevtić), Belgrade 1987, pp. 348–360. The second memorandum was published in a document collection of the Military History Institute: *Zločini na jugoslovenskim prostorima u Prvom i Drugom svetskom ratu, I, Zločini Nezavisne Drzave Hrvatske 1941–1945* (Crimes on the Yugoslav territories in World War One and World War Two, I, Crimes of the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945), Belgrade 1993, pp. 594–625. Shortened versions of the first two memoranda and the integral version of the third was published by the author of this paper: Veljko Dj. Djurić, *Golgota Srpske pravoslavne crkve 1941–1945* (Golgotha of the Serbian Orthodox Church 1941–1945), Belgrade 1997, pp. 413–426, 432–439.

exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats.”²¹

Researchers into the past, especially those interested in the Serbian Orthodox Church, had not known about the Holy Synod’s memoranda for decades. Anyway, had they known what they contained, their approach to the Ustasha Minister Mile Budak would hardly have been so arbitrary. In his work *Magnum Crimen*, Viktor Novak incorrectly stated that Metropolitan Josef had sent the memorandum to the German occupying authorities in Serbia. But that was done by the Holy Synod! The fact that Novak mentioned the memorandum indicates that he was familiar with its content (he copied one paragraph), but omitted the source.²² To make it all the more complicated, in certain places he states that, among other things, he used the Archives of the State Commission for Establishing Crimes of the Occupying Forces and their Collaborators (ASC), quoting parts of the testimony of Jefta Prnjatović, a captive in the Jasenovac concentration camp.²³ It is hard to believe that this material did not include any copies of the memorandum. Or did Novak want something else, still difficult to figure out? The matter becomes clearer to a certain extent if the political climate of the time when Novak’s book was written is taken into account: the regime would not have liked any mention of the efforts of Serbian archbishops to affect the occupying forces as regards reducing crimes against Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia.

It is not possible to establish who has used the materials preserved in the Patriarchate. The first to research and publish parts of that material was a certain Psunjski. He published it in Belgrade in March 1944, in a book entitled “Hrvati u svjetlu istoriske istine” (The Croats in the Light of Historical Truth).

During research for the doctoral thesis “The Serbian Orthodox Church 1941–1945”, the author of this paper used a number of documents from the Archives of the Commissariat for Refugees and those preserved in the Patriarchate. Searching for data useful for the thesis, I read or browsed almost everything related to this subject. I assumed that Psunjski was a pseudonym used by engineer Veliša Rajčević, and confirmation for this I found in the interrogation of the ethnologist Milenko Filipović (in the fall of 1944, as a member of a Chetnik unit, he surrendered to the Partisans somewhere in the area of Kosmaj). However, Rajčević also mentions Filipović on page 25 of his book *The Croats in the Light of Historical Truth*, raising some objections to a text that he had given him to read!

As the basis for his work, Rajčević used the proceedings containing the testimonies of the victims from the Independent State of Croatia. It is likely that he had also read the statements of two young men from the area of Gospić, who, in order to avoid the fate of other Serbs throughout Lika, managed to come to Serbia and tell the representatives of the Commissariat for Refugees what was happening to them. According to Rajčević, “at a banquet in Gospić” Budak said: “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats. Every trace of them shall soon vanish, and what shall remain is the bad memory of them.”²⁴ Those proceedings are not available in the

²¹ V. Novak, op. cit, pp. 784–787.

²² V. Novak, op. cit, p. 633. One of his notes is worth mentioning: “Metropolitan Josif incorrectly identifies the Ustasha terror with Croatian authority.” Ibid.

²³ Ibid, pp. 782–783.

²⁴ Psunjski, *Hrvati u svjetlu istoriske istine* (The Croats in the Light of Historical Truth), (?) 1944, p. 175.

archives, but there are witnesses claiming that one of those two young men from the Gospić area (a man in his eighties during the last war in Croatia in 1991–1995) told them his recollections of these events.

Those familiar with the literature on the suffering of the Serbian people know about the work “Najveći zločini sadašnjice (Patnje i stradanje srpskog naroda u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj od 1941–1945)” (“The greatest crimes of the present. The suffering of the Serbian people in the Independent State of Croatia from 1941 to 1945”, Gornji Milanovac – Priština 1991) by Dragoslav Stranjaković, professor at the Faculty of Theology. He used archival material which a special commission of the Patriarchate collected during the war alongside the commission established by the Commissariat for Refugees, i.e. by the Commissioner Government of Milan Nedić. These are the testimonies of priests and other Serbs who had fled, about their fate from the April War in 1941 onwards. Stranjaković also used the materials collected by Djuro Vilović, citing him as a source.

Stranjaković also examined tens of thousands of pages of different testimonies. Referring to the process of conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Roman Catholicism, he mentions that Mile Budak “officially stated at the gathering in Gospić: ‘We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats!’”²⁵

In this context, the following fact should also be emphasized: when Stranjaković was arrested in 1957, a certain amount of the abovementioned archival material was seized and taken to the State Security Service (where all traces of it has allegedly been lost). One’s suspicions might increase when it is known that the smallest number of documents of the Eparchy of Gornji Karlovac have been preserved, whose suffering was the most severe in comparison with that of other eparchies.

A lot of effort should be invested to determine who was referring to the said Victor Novak’s claim. Eventually, it’s not that important. What is important is the fact that different authors, including experts in recent Serbian history and the Serbian Orthodox Church, have accepted it without dispute.

Novak’s claim has been repeated by other historians, such as Radmila Radić in her work “Verom protiv vere” (By faith against faith) Belgrade 1995, pp. 74 and 351, footnote 184, and Dušan T. Bataković, “Le génocide dans l’état indépendant Croate 1941–1945” (Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945), ([www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/batakovic/..](http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/batakovic/)), as well as theologians such as Đoko Slijepčević in his works “Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve” (History of the Serbian Orthodox Church), III, Belgrade 1991, p. 79, and “Jugoslavija uoči i za vreme Drugog svetskog rata” (Yugoslavia on the eve of and during World War Two), Munich 1978, 691; Dušan Lj. Kašić, “Srpska crkva u tzv. Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj”, Srpska pravoslavna crkva 1920–1970 (“The Serbian Church in the so-called Independent State of Croatia”, Serbian Orthodox Church 1920–1970), Belgrade 1971, p. 186.

It should be noted in particular that even the associates of the former Military History Institute in Belgrade, who edited the collection of documents on the crimes of the Independent State of

²⁵ Dragoslav Stranjaković, *Najveći zločini sadašnjice (Patnje i stradanje srpskog naroda u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj od 1941–1945)* (The greatest crimes of the present. The suffering of the Serbian people in the Independent State of Croatia from 1941 to 1945), Gornji Milanovac – Priština 1991.

Croatia, did not find themselves convinced enough to try to establish the verified source of Budak's speech in Gospić when they repeated what he had said: "We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats. Every trace of them shall soon vanish, and what shall remain is a bad memory of them."²⁶

As far as is known, no qualified historian, at least of Serbian origin, has done general research into the genocide against the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia. Many were interested in local extermination sites, such as Djuro Zatezalo, who researched Jadovno on Mt. Velebit. But those who referred to genocide in a broader context, did not go into details when it came to the core of the policy of the Independent State of Croatia towards the Serbian people.

Djuro Zatezalo, an expert in the events that took place in Lika in 1941, mentions the key sentence, and quotes the text of Franjo Zdunić as the source!²⁷

Savo Skoko, an officer, is explicit when it comes to the date and place of the aforementioned gathering in Gospić: "Thus Mile Budak, Minister of Education and Religion in the ISC, said without hesitation at the Ustasha gathering in Gospić (15 May 1941): 'We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats...'"²⁸

Referring to Budak's text published in "Katolički list" (Catholic Newspapers) on 29 June 1941, in which he stated the Ustasha Either-bend-or-get-out-of-the-way policy, Vasilije Đ. Krestić claimed that it was contained in his (Budak's) statement: "We shall slaughter one-third of the Serbs, expel one third and convert the rest (to Roman Catholicism)." Krestić, however, did not specify the source.²⁹

This paper would not be complete unless we took into consideration the works of numerous publicists and history enthusiasts, especially when it comes to the subject of their native soil and local histories. There are dozens of texts on the date, place and content of Mile Budak's speech, and it would take a lot of space only to list them. What is common to all of them is disagreement as to dates and, to some extent, as to the words used in the speech.

The lack of scientific research papers on the Ustasha masterplan for the Serbian people has therefore been compensated by amateurs and publicists whose mistakes have resulted in new stereotypes. This has been the case with the texts about Budak's speech, and when and where it took place. We shall refer to only a few, as indicators for further discussion.

²⁶ *Zločini na jugoslovenskim prostorima u Prvom i Drugom svetskom ratu*, vol. I, *Zločini Nezavisne Države Hrvatske 1941–1945* (Crimes on the Yugoslav territories in World Wars One and Two, vol. I, Crimes of the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945), Belgrade 1993, XXIV.

²⁷ Đuro Zatezalo, *Jadovno – kompleks ustaških logora 1941* (Jadovno – a complex of Ustasha camps), 1, Belgrade 2007, p. 64.

²⁸ Savo Skoko, *Krvavo kolo hercegovačko 1941–1942* (The bloody wheel-dance of Herzegovina 1941–1942), 1, Pale–Belgrade 1999, p. 11.

²⁹ Vasilije Đ. Krestić, *Genocidom do Velike Hrvatske* (With genocide to Great Croatia), Jagodina 2002, p. 35.

A Partisan from Lika, Franjo Zdunić Lav, wrote: “Mile Budak was among the first who, as soon as 2 May 1941, making his famous speech in Gospić (he spoke from the balcony of the former County Hall), exclaimed: “Run, dogs, over the Drina”, and “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats...”³⁰ Zdunić referred to Victor Novak’s book as the source of these quotes. However, Novak did not claim that Budak ever mentioned dogs or the Drina!

The gathering of the Ustashas and their sympathizers in Sveti Rok, Mile Budak’s birthplace, was held on 11 July. According to the recollections of Nikola and Buda Gnjatović, Budak did not mention the Drina nor did he talk about the agenda against the Serbs.³¹ In the same collection of recollections, Luka Pavičić wrote that an Ustasha gathering, compulsory for all the inhabitants, was summoned on 31 May in Lovinac. The list of speakers included Mile Budak, who spoke against the Serbs, but did not mention the Drina nor the Ustasha agenda.³²

In his article “Sjećanje na prvu godinu rata u Karlovcu i na Kordunu” (Recollections on the first year of the war in Karlovac and Kordun), Grga Milašinović wrote that Gospić was covered with posters announcing Minister Budak’s speech in that town, but did not say anything about the date. “Budak got onto a small stand and began to speak. He did not mince his words, using the most brutal expression against the Serbs. He called for slaughter and murder. His words “Hang the Serbs from the willow trees” and “Expel Serbs across the Drina” are still echoing in my ears.”³³

Gojko Vezmar and Adam Dupalo pointed out that Mile Budak was in Gospić on 22 July, and said on that occasion: “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats.” The authors refer to the newspaper “Hrvatski narod” (Croatian People) of 30 July 1941 as a source. However, the text is not contained in the said issue!³⁴

Dušan Uzelac wrote that Budak was in Gospić on 2 May, and addressed words to the Serbs on that occasion: “Run, dogs, over the Drina”. On 22 July 1941, he was even more explicit, saying that “part of the Serbs shall be exterminated, part expelled, and the rest converted to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats”.³⁵ Uzelac did not provide any source for his claims.

³⁰ Franjo Zdunić Lav, “Ustaški zločini na Jadovnom i u nekim drugim logorima uz osvrt na njihove korijene”, *Kotar Gospić i kotar Perušić u Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945* (“The Ustasha crimes in Jadovno and some other death camps, with a reflection on their roots”, Gospić and Perušić Counties in the National Liberation War 1941–1945), Karlovac 1989, pp. 168–200, 180.

³¹ Nikola Gnjatović, Bude Gnjatović, “Ustaški zločin u selu Rasoji”, *Kotar Gračac u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945* (“The Ustasha crime in the village of Rasoja”, Gračac County in the National Liberation War 1941–1945) 1, Karlovac 1984, p. 414.

³² Luka Pavičić, “Općina Lovinac između dva rata i u ustanku 1941. godine”, *Kotar Gračac u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945* (“Municipality of Lovinac in the interwar period and in the Uprising of 1941”, Gračac County in the National Liberation War 1941–1945), 1, Karlovac 1984, p. 396.

³³ Grga Milašinović, “Sjećanje na prvu godinu rata u Karlovcu i na Kordunu”, *Prva godina narodnooslobodilačkog rata na području Karlovca, Korduna, Gline, Like, Gorskog kotara, Pokuplja i Žumberka* (“Recollections on the first year of the war in Karlovac and Kordun”, The first year of the National Liberation War in the area of Karlovac, Kordun, Gline, Lika, Gorski kotar, Kupa and Žumberak), Karlovac 1971, pp. 363–364.

³⁴ Gojko Vezmar, Adam Dupalo, “Teror i pokršćavanje Srba 1941. i 1942. godine”, *Dvor na Uni* (“Terror and religious conversion of the Serbs in 1941 and 1942”, Dvor na Uni), Dvor na Uni 1991, pp. 327–328.

³⁵ Dušan Uzelac, *Lika i Srbi medačke opštine – Hronike sela Metka, Počitelja, Vrepca, Mogorića i Raduča* (Lika and the Serbs from the Municipality of Medak – Chronicles of the villages of Metak, Počitelj, Vrebac, Mogorić and Raduč), Belgrade 2004, p. 408.

The same date of 22 July was mentioned by Mane Pešut, a Chetnik from Lika. He also did not refer to any source, but the words quoted were a bit different: “We shall exterminate part of the Serbs, another part shall be deported, and the third shall be forcedly converted to Roman Catholicism, and thus absorbed by the Croats.”³⁶

Neither the texts of Roman Catholic priests nor the publications issued by the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia mention the speech of Mile Budak. This, however, does not mean that other events were not mentioned in the given context.

Contemporary Croatian historiography and journalism, especially those under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, cannot deny certain events, but interprets them differently. Thus, for example, when dealing with the religious conversion of Orthodox Serbs as a state project (and a project of the Roman Catholic Church as well), they disregard the key speech of Minister Budak.³⁷

State genocide during World War Two in the Independent State of Croatia was not among the topics of interest in Croatia, especially for those educated in history. Nevertheless, the subject was dealt with in a broader context.

General Šime Balen wrote: “In his speech in Gospić, in July 1941, the Ustasha Minister of Religion and Pavelić’s deputy, Mile Budak, said in public: “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, expel another part, and convert the rest to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats.”³⁸

Ferdo Čulinović, with a PhD in legal sciences, quotes parts of Budak’s speech, but refers to no source: “For example, at one gathering in Gospić (in early May 1941), the Ustasha deputy leader Mile Budak publicly sent a message to the Serbs to flee from the ISC, because otherwise they would be exterminated... (‘Run, dogs, over the Drina!’)...”³⁹

It is known that historian Fikreta Jelić Butić did not mention Budak’s speech in her book “Ustaše i NDH” (The Ustasha and the ISC, Zagreb 1978), which she prepared on the basis of Franjo Tuđman’s programme according to certain data; at the time, he was Director of the Institute for the History of the Workers’ Movement of Croatia.⁴⁰ However, Fikreta Jelić Butić refers to and retells Budak’s other speeches.

³⁶ Mane Pešut, *Rat i revolucija u Lici* (The War and Revolution in Lika), Munich 1966; second edition: *Krajina u ratu 1941–1945* (Krajina in the war 1941–1945), Belgrade 1995, p. 39.

³⁷ Jure Krišto, *Katolička crkva i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941–1945* (The Roman Catholic Church and the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945), I–II, Zagreb 1998; Juraj Batelja, *Rivellijeva zavjera laži. Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac i Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva* (Rivelli’s conspiracy of lies. Blessed Aloysius Stepinac and the Serbian Orthodox Church), Zagreb 2015; Robin Harris, *Stepinac – njegov život i vrijeme* (Stepinac – his life and times), Zagreb 2016.

³⁸ Šime Balen, *Pavelić*, Zagreb 1952, p. 116.

³⁹ Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije* (Occupiers’ division of Yugoslavia), Belgrade 1970, p. 312.

⁴⁰ Bruno Bušić, *Hrvatske ustaše i komunisti* (digitalna obrada) (Croatian Ustasha and Communists), Zagreb 2009.

In the works of Bogdan Krizman, neither Budak's speeches nor those of other Ustasha leaders are mentioned.⁴¹

It seems that in their works on World War Two, contemporary historians in Croatia avoid mentioning mass gatherings, and speakers the content of whose speeches was directed against Serbs, Jews and Roma.

Ljubo Boban, a Croatian historian who, among other things, researched the archives of the Yugoslav Royal Government in exile, published parts of the correspondence between some individuals from Zagreb and certain ministers (their provenience is mainly the Croatian Party of Rights). From these documents, one report is to be singled out: that of an unidentified person to Grga Andjelinović, dated 23 December 1941, in which Mile Budak is reported to have said "Come on, dogs, run over the Drina!"⁴²

Jozo Tomašević, an American economist of Croatian origin, does not mention Budak's speech in his works.⁴³

The German-Hungarian authors (officers by education) Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat also do not mention Budak's speeches.⁴⁴

In his paper "Croatia 1941–1946" (www: churchinhistory.org), American historian Dennis Barton, although he unintentionally refers to Budak as Mile Budek, quotes Budak's words, referring to Fitzroy Maclean's *Disputed Barricade* (1957) as the source.

British historian Robert B. McCormick mentions Budak's "trinity" (p. 78), but further explains in a note that he is familiar with the fact that certain historians claim that Budak never spoke such words.⁴⁵

Irina Ognjanova, a historian from Bulgaria, dealt with events in the Independent State of Croatia in several of her works. In one of them, she claimed that Budak spoke at a certain banquet in Gospić on 5 June 1941, and published a broader version of his speech, referring to Avro Manhattan's "Terror over Yugoslavia, The Threat to Europe", London 1955, p. 60.⁴⁶ In another work, she referred to Ferdo Čulinović's claim that Budak spoke in Gospić on 15 May.⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Ante Pavelić i ustaše* (Ante Pavelić and the Ustasha), Zagreb 1978; *Pavelić između Hitlera i Musolinija* (Pavelić between Hitler and Mussolini), Zagreb 1980; *Ustaše i Treći Reich* (The Ustasha and the Third Reich), 1–2, Zagreb 1983; *Pavelić u bjegstvu* (Pavelić in flight), Zagreb 1986.

⁴² Ljubo Boban, *Hrvatska u arhivima izbjegličke vlade 1941–1945* (Croatia in the archives of the Government in exile 1941–1945), Zagreb 1985, pp. 329–348, 345.

⁴³ Jozo Tomasevich, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu 1941–1945* (The Chetniks in World War Two 1941–1945), Zagreb 1979; Jozo Tomasevich, *Rat i revolucija* (The war and revolution), Zagreb 2000.

⁴⁴ Ladislaus Hory, Martin Broszat, *Der Kroatische Ustasha-Staat 1941–1945*, Stuttgart 1965 (it is also published in Serbian Cyrillic under the title "Ustaška država Hrvatska 1941–1945", The Ustasha state of Croatia 1941–1945, Belgrade 1994).

⁴⁵ Robert B. McCormick, *Croatia under Ante Pavelić*, London – New York 2014, p. 78.

⁴⁶ "We shall kill some of the Serbs, we shall expel others, and the remainder will be forced to embrace the Roman Catholic faith. These last will in due course be absorbed by the Croat segment of the population." – Irina Ognjanova, „Nationalism and National Policy in Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945), 15. in: Topics in Feminism, History and Philosophy (IWM Junior Visiting Fellow Conferences, Vol 6, edited by Rogers, Dorothy, Joshua Wheeler, Marina Zavacka and Shawna Casebier, Vienna; IWM 2000.

⁴⁷ Irina Ognjanova, "Religion and Church in Ustasha ideology (1941–1945)", *Croatica Cristiana periodica*, 64, Zagreb 2009, 157–190. She wrote: "On May 15th in Gospić Mile Budak formulated the Ustasha program for the solution of the Serbian issue in the ISC [Independent State of Croatia – note by the author] in the following way:

This paper should end with the words that Budak said during his hearing and trial, concluded on 6 June 1945 before the Second Army Court in Zagreb.

According to the rules of a hearing, the investigator asks questions and the defendant answers, while a stenograph records them. In some cases, as in post-war Communist Partisan trials, this procedure was not fully followed. After a period of time, the investigator would submit to the defendant a copy of the hearing for their signature, which would often be an altered version of what the defendant had said; such a document should be critically treated by a trained historian. This becomes even more apparent when one compares the records of Budak's interrogation and hearing with his closing speech before sentence was passed! Despite many similarities, the differences between them indicate that, by the decision of the investigator, certain parts of the hearing were simply skipped, although Budak had referred to them in his defence.

Some authors refer to the record of the hearing and specify its call number: Military Archives, ISC, 87-6/27. Having accessed the document with that number, one notices that the content is inadequate. In plain English – it is the wrong number.

A few Croatian historians who have read the records of Budak's hearing refer to the Croatian State Archive, Fund of the Ministry of the Interior MUP RH, 013.0/52, File Mile Budak!

One transcript has been preserved in the Military Archives in Belgrade: the Fund of the ISC, box IO 9, folder 3, document 4/1-20. Careful reading of this document reveals the following facts:

Mile Budak was interrogated on 26 May 1945, in the Criminal Department of the Public Prosecution of Croatia.

Following the sentence, "After the defendant was presented with the subject of the criminal proceedings, he stated as follows...", the next 17 pages contain Budak's speech, in which he speaks about his life and work, with an emphasis on personal activities in the Ustasha organization and the period when he served as minister in the Government of the Independent State of Croatia and envoy to Nazi Germany.⁴⁸

Budak confirmed that on 5 May 1941, together with Ante Pavelić and Milovan Zanić, he signed a law on conversion from one religion to another, but stated that he had no recollections of its contents (page 8).

'Part of the Serbs we will kill, other we will deport, and the rest we will convert to Catholic faith, and thus we will assimilate them.' – *Ibid.*, pp. 177–178.

⁴⁸ Veljko Djurić Mišina, "Odbrana Mile Budaka na suđenju u Zagrebu 1946. godine" (Defense of Mile Budak at the trial in Zagreb in 1946), *Annual of the Museum of Victims of Genocide*, 7, Kragujevac–Belgrade 2015, pp. 165–168.

Budak also confirmed what he had said in his speech in Virovitica, and testified that some Serbs, reacting to his words “Either bend or get out of the way”, did bend. He added that after he learned about the slaughter of those Serbs who had converted to Roman Catholicism, he had a conflict with Pavelić and did not speak in public ever again.⁴⁹ This claim, at least, is false, because in the following months he continued with his public appearances and spoke on 28 July in Gornje Kosinje near Gospić. This was reported the following day in Zagreb’s *Hrvatski narod* (Croatian People) (pages 13 and 14).

Speaking in the court about his understanding of the Ustasha policy towards the Serbian people, Budak said, among other things: “Given my previous speeches and texts, which are presented to me, I can say the following: Shortly after the Independent State of Croatia was declared, I held meetings at several places with the desire to present the historical significance of the realization of our dream of a state and, at the same time, to clarify our attitude towards the Serbs. It was my intention transmit to these assemblies the organization of the Ustasha movement in the way I imagined it. What I had said about the Serbs was the experience of the people, formulated not by me, but the people. Distrust! I used folk phrases to express this. I have already heard that I somewhere said “Run, dogs, over the Drina!” I do not remember. But if I did say it, it would be an insult only; but also, although most inelegant, evidence that I have never had the idea that the Croatian-Serbian dispute could be resolved by slaughter and extermination, but only by mutual exchanges of population” (page 17).

The investigator at Budak’s hearing was Ferdo Čulinović!⁵⁰ He confirmed this in his commentary on the forced religious conversion of Orthodox Serbs: “Pavelić and his closest associates thought about that in the first days of their rule. This is indicated by the statement of the Deputy Head of State Mile Budak (15 May 1941 in Gospić) – “we shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, another part shall be displaced, and the rest converted to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats”.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Material from the trial (indictment, evidence, records) has been preserved in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, MUP RH, 013.0/52, Mile Budak Case Record.

⁵⁰ Ferdo Čulinović (Karlovac, 17 May 1897 – Zagreb, 15 September 1971) completed his high school education in Senj, enrolled in law studies at the University of Zagreb and completed them in 1922 by defending his doctoral thesis. He served as a lawyer and judge throughout the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The defeat of the Army and disintegration of the Yugoslav state found him in Gospić. By the time of the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, he had lived with his family in Split and then fled to the territory under Partisan control. As member of the General Staff of Croatia, he dealt with legal and judicial matters. At the Third Session of AVNOH on 9 May 1944, he was elected a member of the Council and the Head of the Department of Justice. From 1945, he was a full-time professor at the Law Faculty in Zagreb. He was Dean of the Law Faculty, then Director of the Institute for the History of the State and Law of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, the founder and head of postgraduate studies and lecturer at other universities in Yugoslavia. He was a full-member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and an honorary doctor of Moscow State University. Čulinović was a very fruitful author in the field of legal and historical sciences. The two-volume work *Yugoslavia between the two wars*, Zagreb 1961, places him among the creators of scientific historiography about Yugoslavia. Among numerous works, the following have been especially important in Yugoslav historiography: *Slom stare Jugoslavije* (The collapse of old Yugoslavia), Zagreb 1958; *Okupatorska podela Jugoslavije* (Occupiers’ division of Yugoslavia), Belgrade 1970.

⁵¹ “In the hearing before the Yugoslav investigative authorities (carried out by the author himself), Mile Budak, extradited to Yugoslavia by the Allies in June 1941 [May 1945 – note by V. Dj. M.] denied these words, defending himself by claiming that this political line against the Serbs was set up by Ante Pavelic. He was only implementing Poglavnik’s political course against the Serbian population in the ISC, although – as Budak said on this occasion – he personally opposed Ustasha terror and allegedly broke up with Poglavnik for that reason. These statements by Budak should be taken cautiously, with regard to the time, place and circumstances in which they were given – after his imprisonment on charges of committing war crimes.” Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podela Jugoslavije* (Occupiers’ division of Yugoslavia), Belgrade 1970, p. 348.

CONCLUSION

As a member of the Austro-Hungarian troops that invaded Serbia in World War One, Mile Budak fell into Serbian captivity; along with about 30,000 other military prisoners, he retreated with the Serbian Army across Albania and was then interned in Italy. In 1932, he fled Yugoslavia, considering that his life was in danger, and joined the Ustasha organization of Ante Pavelić, who appointed him his deputy. After the agreement signed between Yugoslavia and Italy, he returned to Zagreb in 1938. He edited high-circulation daily newspaper “Hrvatski narod” (Croatian people), and worked on expanding the Ustasha organization. After the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia, Pavelić appointed him Minister of Education and Religion on 16 April.

As one of the Ustasha’s chief ideologists and a minister whose portfolio included propaganda, he delivered speeches at least once a week, at numerous gatherings throughout the Ustasha state.

In memory of the so-called Lika Uprising (a small-scale sabotage action by the Ustasha, who arrived secretly from Italy and launched an attack on a police station in the village of Brušani near Gospić), Budak wrote in 1933 the poem “Titanic Mountains”, dedicated to Pavelić (the poem is better known as “Run, dogs, over the Drina!”). These words he constantly repeated in speeches at organized gatherings, inciting hatred against the Serbs. On one occasion, he said: “We shall exterminate one part of the Serbs, displace the others, and the rest convert to Roman Catholicism, making them Croats” – which, in fact, reflected the masterplan policy of the Ustasha state for a third of its population.

Although this sentence has frequently been referred to in historiography and propaganda texts, it is actually based on numerous incorrect claims related to it.

Mile Budak was undoubtedly the spokesman of a policy which, in its character and effect, was genocidal.

Like almost the entire Ustasha state leadership of the Independent State of Croatia, after the war Budak tried to find refuge with the Anglo-Americans. However, in May 1945, the British handed him over to the Communist authorities in Zagreb. After a short hearing and trial, in which he presented a lot of lies in his defence, he was hung on 7 June 1945, in a wood near Zagreb.

From the geostrategic and geopolitical point of view, the resolution of the so-called Serbian Question in Croatia – considered to be a role-model for a long-lasting historical process – reached its final fulfilment in early August 1995 when, in Operation “Storm”, the last major battle of the Croatian War of Independence, hundreds of thousands of Serbs were expelled from their centuries-old homes, removing this “question”, with the support of the Vatican, Germany and Anglo-Americans, from the historical stage.

What has been more than evident is the fact that these words by Mile Budak were a prelude and introduction to what was to happen. Today, the number of Serbs in Croatia is so small that it only serves as a memorial to the fact that they had once lived in the Western Balkans.

This paper, regardless of the fact that its subject matter has been one single sentence, could

serve as a warning to revisionist interpretations of the influence of certain individuals on historical events.

The speech of Minister Mile Budak in Gospić on 15 May 1941 was the prelude to and introduction of the masterplan against the Serbs that began in the Independent State of Croatia in the period 1941–1945, and ended in early August 1995 with the defeat of the Republic of Srpska Krajina.

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