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Development Of Orthodoxy In Croatia And The Croatian Orthodox Church

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On the 4th of April 1942, almost a year after the Independent State of Croatia was founded, newspapers published a government statute No. XC-800- Z-1942 announcing the establishment of the Croatian Orthodox Church. On the 5th of June, on the basis of this statute, the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church was approved, and on the 7th of June the Most Rev. Germogen was enthroned as the first Orthodox Metropolitan of Zagreb. The Croatian Orthodox Church was active in Croatia until the end of the war when it was suppressed by the new Yugoslav authorities and the Metropolitan Germogen was executed. I actively participated
in the founding of the Croatian Orthodox Church, writing the church's constitution, negotiating with the Croatian authorities and was secretary to Metropolitan Germogen.

The time has come to tell the truth, calmly and objectively, about the founding of the Church and the function which the Croatian Orthodox Church performed during the Second World War in the Independent State of Croatia. For a better understanding of how this autocephalous Church came into being a short historical survey of the development of Orthodoxy in Croatian territories is required (the present day Yugoslav Republics of Croatia and of Bosnia and Herzegovina).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORTHODOXY AMONG THE CROATS

BEFORE THE TURKISH CONQUEST Before the final schism with Rome in 1054 the old Patriarchate of Constantinople did not extend to the lands settled by the Croats with the exception of some parts of Dioclea: the territories west of the river Drina and west of the town of Budva were outside of the Eastern Patriarchate. Even at the time of Photius's schism (863-923), when the Metropolitan of Split looked eastward, he nevertheless remained outside the jurisdiction of Constantinople but was subordinate to the Aquileian Patriarchate. The situation did not change when the Bulgarians created a patriarchate in Ohrid (927-1018), nor was it affected by the split of Christianity in 1054 into the Western or Roman Catholic Church and Eastern or Orthodox Church.

The first penetration of Orthodoxy into Croat territories occurred at the beginning of the 13th century following the conquest of Red Croatia (Dioclea or Zeta, Travunja and Zahumlje) by Stevan Nemanja, the Grand Count of Rascia (Serbia), and by his son Stevan, already crowned king of Serbia. In 1219 Sava Nemanjic founded the Serbian Orthodox Church and established two episcopal sees (Ston and Prevlaka/Kotor) on Croatian Catholic territory. The one in Ston was short lived due to the lack of an Orthodox population in that area, while the other survived until 1485, when it was transferred to Cetinje in present day Montenegro. In the meantime, the Serbian Orthodox Church in the territories of present day East Herzegovina and Montenegro, with support from the Serbian State, and with sporadic pressure, including forcible conversions, succeeded in limiting Catholicism to a narrow stretch of land along the coast. During the Turkish domination in this region the process of conversion to the Orthodox faith resulted in the disappearance of Roman Catholicism from Montenegro about the year 1650, and in reducing the Croatian Catholic population in the coastal region to small pockets around the city of Kotor. Catholicism survived along the Dubrovnik coast, protected by the boundaries of the Dubrovnik Republic. There was no Orthodoxy, prior to the Turkish invasion, among the Croats in Bosnia (west of the rivers Drina and Neretva) and in Srijem (north of the river Sava).
THE PERIOD OF TURKISH RULE With the Turkish advancements, the first Vlachs (nomadic herdsmen originating in a region called Old Vlach east of the river Drina), appeared in the territory of East Bosnia. Descendants of the old Roman population from the Balkan Peninsula, they were Orthodox (unlike the Croatian Catholic Vlachs in the Dinaric-Velebit region) and were known in various regions and at different times as Arumanians, Czinczars, Riscani, Rkaci and Eastern-Greeks. With the rapid fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463 and the Turkish advancement into Croatia, irregular military supporting units of Vlachs, called Martholosen, were brought by the Turks to the newly conquered territories. They also came to settle and work the land in central Croatia which had been depopulated as a result of the constant fighting. These Orthodox settlers were predominantly Vlach herdsmen, partly slavonicized, and came from the central Balkan regions: Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro and East Herzegovina. The strong migratory movements of the Vlachs affected a number of other nationalities: Montenegrins, Serbs (Rascians), Macedonians, Albanians, Bulgarians, Greeks and also Croats (Uskoks, Prebjezi, Bunjevci, Predavci). The language of the Vlachs, apart from Vlacho-Romanian, was predominantly a Ijekavian-Neostokavian dialect, due either to their gradual westward movement through the Ijekavian territories or else as a result of their long stay in the Ijekavian territories of East Herzegovina, Montenegro and Sanjak.

The Orthodox Church followed the migratory population. First monasteries appeared, some of them built on the ruins of abandoned Franciscan friaries. During the 16th and 17th centuries, on the Turkish held territories, 3 Serbian Orthodox monasteries were founded in Herzegovina, 8 in Bosnia, 9 in East Croatia (2 in Slavonia, 7 in Srijem), 3 in South Croatia (Dalmatia) and 4 in Bosanska Krajina. In Banska, or Christian Croatia 4, 2 monasteries were founded. In 1502 the first metropolitan see was founded in the Krusedol monastery in Srijem, in Croatian territory. In Srijem the Orthodox settlers were predominantly Ekavian speaking Serbs, while in the remaining Croatian lands, particularly in the regions bordering on the Turkish held territories, Ijekavian speaking Vlachs predominated among the settlers. Following the restoration of the Serbian Patriarchate in Pec in 1557, it succeeded in bringing under its jurisdiction the majority of the Orthodox clergy, including the Greco-Vlach (Phanariot) clergy who were dispersed over those regions of Croatia and Southern Hungary conquered by the Turks. Makarije, the first patriarch of the restored Pec Patriarchate, founded the episcopal see in Orahovica for Turkish Slavonia and the Dabro-Bosnian see for the rest of Croatia- Bosnia under Turkish rule. A period of close cooperation with the Turks followed (1557-1690) and during that time the Patriarchate of Pec evolved into a strong theocratic and feudal force, a kind of autonomous government inside the Ottoman empire. The Patriarchs of Pec exploited the situation, undertaking intensive campaigns to convert Catholic Croats to Orthodoxy and at the same time were using pressure on the Catholic clergy to pay tributes to the Serbian Orthodox hierarchy. Conversion to Orthodoxy was at that time encouraged due to the wars being waged between the Ottoman empire and the European Catholic powers, resulting in the persecutions of Catholics, considered to be the most unreliable element under the Ottoman rule. Many remaining pockets of Catholicism were converted to Orthodoxy at that time in the territory of Turkish Croatia (Bosanska Krajina and North Dalmatia) and in the Dubrovnik hinterland, unless they had
already embraced Islam. Many Catholics changed to Orthodoxy voluntarily for lack of Catholic clergy, as the Franciscans, the only Catholic priests or monks even partly tolerated by the Ottoman rulers, could not provide for the religious needs of the Catholic Croats.

After the Christian/Islam battle line was consolidated in front of the city of Senj and in the zones between the rivers Kupa-Una and Cazma-Ilova in Croatia in the middle of the 16th century, the boundary line remained unchanged for almost 150 years, until the end of 1699. During that time (particularly between 1597 and 1605) numerous Uskoks and Prebjezi, among them a number of the Orthodox population, crossed into the territory of Christian Croatia. In 1595, by a previous agreement with the Archduke Ferdinand, the bishop of the Vlachs, Vasilije, moved from the Croatian territory held by the Turks (Orahovica) and established the first Orthodox episcopal see in the Croatia-Slavonia region. His successor, Simun Vratanja, entered into a union with the Catholic Church of the Croatian Christian territory in 1611, recognizing the bishop of Zagreb. This Uniat episcopate known as Svidnicko- Marcanski had about 60,000 adherents using the Greco-Slavonic rite. (Its bishops being: Predojevic, Stanislavic, Kordic, Mijakirc Zorcic, etc.). At the same time, two more Orthodox episcopal sees were founded on Turkish held Croatian territory (Medak and Savina) and two episcopal sees transferred their seat to the territory of Bosnia (Zvornik and Sarajevo, in 1709).

THE ROLE OF THE METROPOLITAN SEE OF KARLOVCI Following the wars at the end of the 17th century the Turks were expelled from parts of Croatian territory (Slavonia, Lika, Banija and a large part of the Dalmatian hinterland) and also from Hungary and Northern Serbia. These wars caused two other important migratory movements of the Orthodox population; led by the Pec Patriarchs Arsenije Crnojevic in 1690, with 37,000 Serbian families; and Arsenije Joanovic Sakabenta in 1737. These two migrations followed the wars between Austria and Turkey and were the result of the insurrection and retreat of the Orthodox population from the rebellious regions and were directed towards South Hungary (Backa and Banat) and Eastern Croatia (Srijem). In contrast to the earlier, predominantly Vlach migrations, which moved westward and spoke either Vlach or the Ijekavian Neostokavian dialect, these new northern migrations consisted mainly of Serbs who spoke the Ekavian dialect.

As a result of these migrations and because of the border, which at that time separated them from their fellow Serbs under the Turkish domination, the ties between the Metropolitan of Srijem and the Pec Patriarchate were weakened. The Patriarchate was gradually losing its Serbian character and was later dissolved, (in 1766), its territory returned to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. From that time almost all the nominated bishops were Phanariots.
In 1690 the Austrian Emperor Leopold recognised the supremacy in religious matters of Arsenije Crnojevic, not only over the recently arrived Orthodox population which he had led, but also over those Christians of the Greco-Slavonic rite who had crossed into the Christian part of Croatia more than a century before and had formed the Eastern Catholic Svidnicko-Marcanska dioceese. This began the rivalry in the first half of the 18th century between the Croat-Vlach supporters of church unity (Uniats) and the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan of Srijem for jurisdiction over the people of the Greco-Slavonic rite in the territory of Croatia. In the struggle the opponents of unity succeeded not only in stifling the attempts of the Greek Catholic bishops to achieve union in parts liberated from the Turks (Slavonia and Srijem) but also in gaining control of the population of the Eastern rite in East Lika, Kordun and Banija, which previously had adhered to union. At the same time the Serbian metropolitan see in Srijem began its organization of the Orthodox Church, not only for the Serbian population in Srijem and in Southern Hungary (Vojvodina), but also among the Orthodox Vlachs and Croats in the rest of Croatia. An episcopal see was founded in Karlovac but was soon divided into: Karlovacko-Senjska and Kostajnicko-Zrinopoljsko-Licka (1713-69); Pakranska (1705); and Lepinsko-Severinska (1734-50). The episcopal see of Srijem was from 1751 administered by a metropolitan, at first from Krusedol, and later from Srijemski Karlovci.

As a result of these developments the metropolitan see of Karlovci became an Orthodox Ecclesiastical Province which up to 1920 embraced all the Orthodox Serbs, Vlachs, Croats and Romanians in Southern Hungary (Vojvodina) and in Croatia. Orthodox Vlachs and Orthodox Croats living in parts of Dalmatia under Venetian rule, and in Bosnia, were outside of its jurisdiction, as were Romanians from the 1860s, when the Romanian Orthodox Church was founded in Hungary. The Metropolitans of Karlovci titled themselves the Supreme Metropolitans (Serbian Archbishops) and acknowledged the supremacy of the Patriarch of Pec. Only, after the Patriarchate of Pec was abolished in 1766 did Metropolitan Josif Rajacic receive the title of Patriarch in 1848.

After the formation of the metropolitan see in Karlovci, the Orthodox Church in Croatia, officially known among the Croatian Vlachs and Croats as Eastern Catholic, came more and more under pressure from the Serbian Orthodox Church whose aim was to take control of the non-Serbian Orthodox clergy and population, in particular the numerous Vlachs, most of whom were slavonicized or croaticized. With the weakening and subsequent abolition of the Pec Patriarchate in 1766, this aim lost its impetus in the territories under Turkish rule, but gained momentum in Banska Croatia and in Vojna Krajina through the workings of the metropolitan see of Karlovci. In the second half of the last century the serbianization of the non-Serbian Orthodox population culminated in the creation of a Serbian church-nation consciousness among the majority of the Orthodox population in Croatia. Since that time Serbian has become for many synonymous with Orthodoxy. In this way modern Serbian nationalism moved not only northwards through migrations but also westwards through conversions to Serbian Orthodoxy. This caused Serbian ethnic dispersal and formed a substantial Serbian minority in the Croatian territory. At the same time the ancient centre of the Serbian Church in Pec remained outside the
influence of the metropolitan see of Karlovci and was gradually settled by the Albanians. During the dictatorship of Khuen-Hedervary in Croatia (1883-1903) the first Serbian Orthodox schools were founded, and in Pakrac a Serbian Orthodox Faculty of Theology was opened. The flag of the Kingdom of Serbia was later taken as the Orthodox flag in Croatia. Similar developments took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Austro-Hungarian occupation when, in 1905, autonomous Serbian Orthodox Church schools were officially confirmed. This characteristic method of awakening national consciousness through the religious affiliation brought the classification of the majority of Orthodox as Serbs, and the analogous classification of Latin and Greek rite Catholics as Croats, thus greatly impeding the awakening of national consciousness among the Muslim population. The most negative result of this was that what used to be a religious mosaic was transformed, Croats and Serbs intermixing without respect for their historical, cultural or political boundaries, which in turn caused complications between these two and the other nations on the Balkan Peninsula. The result of this process was the very slow formation of Serbia and Croatia into modern religiously heterogeneous nations (especially Serbia) and the formation of substantial minorities in the Croatian and Serbian territories: 28.8% in the present day Republic of Serbia, 20.6% in the present day Republic of Croatia (with Serbs making 14.2%) and a very complicated situation in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (39.6% Muslims, 37.2% Serbs and 20.6% Croats). This led to intolerance, friction and conflict between the minorities and the indigenous population. This was greatly exploited by the foreigners: the regime of Khuen-Hedervary in Banska Croatia, the Autonomists in Dalmatia, the regime of Kallay in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italians, Germans and Hungarians during the Second World War, etc. In addition to this the extermination of Muslims took place in Serbia during the last century, and in Sanjak and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of this century, again by the Serbs. This led to the mutual extermination of both Serb and Croat minorities during the Second World War.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN YUGOSLAVIA 1918-1941 When the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded in 1918 there were three autocephalous Orthodox Church regions in the territory of the new state at the metropolitan level: Karlovci, Belgrade and Montenegro-Littoral. Also the Dalmatian part of the Bukovinsko-Dalmatian metropolitan see and the National Autonomous Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the supreme rule of the Patriarch of Constantinople. All these Churches were united in Belgrade on the 26th of May 1919 into one Serbian Orthodox Church for the newly formed kingdom. The Serbian Patriarchate was established on the 30th of August 1920 in Srijemski Karlovci, and on 12th November in the same year the electoral council met and elected Dimitrije Pavlovic, Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan of Serbia, as the Patriarch (1920-30). Patriarch Dimitrije was succeeded by Varnava Rosic (1930-37), up to that time Metropolitan of Skopje. During his time the Serbian Orthodox Church violently resisted the concordat between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Holy See which the government of Milan Stojadinovic wanted to ratify in 1937. During this conflict Patriarch Varnava died, and blood was shed in the demonstrations which followed, on the 19th of July 1937 in Belgrade. The new Patriarch Gavrilo Dozic (1938-50) was arrested in April 1941 in the Ostrog monastery by the Germans and, since he refused to collaborate, was interned until the end of the war.
The process of organization of the Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia was started by enacting temporary legislation about the Serbian Patriarchate (23th October 1920) and centralizing the administrative and judicial power of the Serbian Patriarchate (13th December 1920), the law of the Serbian Orthodox Church (8th November 1929) and finally the constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church (16th November 1931).

In its organization the Serbian Orthodox Church was, in the period between the two wars, one, indivisible and episcopalian, with main administrative divisions into eparchies in hierarchic and administrative matters. In this way the name Eastern Catholic Church was officially abolished in Croatia and all the Orthodox in the territory of Yugoslavia, including the non-Serbian population (Macedonians, Montenegrins, Croats, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Romanians, Albanians, Greeks, Czinczars, etc.) were subordinated to the Patriarch in Belgrade and considered to be of the Serbian Orthodox faith. There is no doubt that the neglect and persecutions of non-Serbian nations in pre-war Yugoslavia, primarily Croats, Macedonians and Albanians, caused ill feeling towards the Serbian Orthodox Church also, as the one most favoured and privileged. The colonization of purely Croatian and Catholic regions by Serbian volunteers, persecution of Muslims after the First World War, building of Serbian Orthodox churches and attempts to penetrate into purely Catholic territories like the Adriatic coast (the island of Vis for example) caused, in addition to ethnic animosity, even more ill will towards the Serbian Orthodox Church.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VARIOUS NATIONAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES In contrast to other world religions which have no close ties with individual nations, and unlike the Catholic Church, which is under papal authority, the Orthodox Church has no common Organisation. “The Patriarch of Constantinople has no authority over the Orthodox Churches of other countries. Territories in the East, lost by Byzantium during its decline, gradually lost contact with the central authority, while the regions bordering on the Frankish empire and Byzantium oscillated for some time between the Pope and the ecumenical Patriarch (Moravia, Bulgaria, Dalmatian Theme 7). On gaining strength the new mediaeval states under the Byzantine cultural influence aimed for political and ecclesiastic independence. The Bulgarian ruler Simeon, after proclaiming himself Emperor of the Bulgarians and Greeks in 925, established in Bulgaria a patriarchate which became independent from Byzantium (927-1018); Bulgarians again enjoyed an autonomous Church in the time of Ivan Asjen II (1218-41). At the same time, while Byzantium was in disarray during the fourth Crusade, Šava Nemanjic founded the independent Serbian archiepiscopacy in 1219 which became an independent patriarchate in the time of Tsar Dusan in 1346. Its archbishop, Joakinije, was proclaimed “The Patriarch of the Serbs and Bulgarians”. The Turkish invasion meant the end of the independent Serbian Church. The Romanian Church was autonomous between 1425 and 1440. The Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople, seeking help from the West against the Turks, tried once more (1439) to resolve the question of schism (Florentine Union). Their move was used by the Russian Church as a pretext to deny allegiance to the Patriarch of Constantinople and then to
declare their independence in 1448. The Metropolitan of Moscow took the title of Patriarch in 1589. Peter the Great abolished the Moscow Patriarchate (1721) and in its place installed the Holy Synod. The Patriarchate was restored only in 1917.8 Following the rehabilitation of the Orthodox Church in the Balkan Peninsula after the long period of close collaboration with the Turks, it started actively to participate in the resistance against the Ottoman rule, and in addition to religious needs played a part in preserving literacy, culture, and in nurturing national tradition. The Patriarchate of Pec played the same role (1557-1766). After the national states were formed on the Balkan Peninsula the autonomous Churches were established in their territories. Beside the Patriarchate of Constantinople the following Churches became independent: the Greek Orthodox Church (synod 1828, autocephalous 1833, recognised 1850); the Romanian Orthodox Church (autocephalous 1865, patriarchate 1925); the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (independence 1870, exarchate 1945); the Hungarian Orthodox Church (independence 1930); the Serbian Orthodox Church (autonomy 1830, autocephalous 1879, patriarchate 1920); the Albanian Orthodox Church (autocephalous 1939); the Macedonian Orthodox Church (autonomy 1959, autocephalous 1967) and the Croatian Orthodox Church (autocephalous only 1942-45). In addition to the four Patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem) there were also numerous national and autocephalous Churches in existence: Russian (2), Georgian, Sinaian, Cypriot, Polish, Czechoslovak, Finnish, Dodecanese, Ukrainian (2), American (3), Syrian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, etc.

THE CROATIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE LEGAL AND OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE ORTHODOX PEOPLE IN THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA DURING 1941 Following the collapse of Yugoslavia after the attack by the Axis powers, the Independent State of Croatia was founded on the 10th of April 1941. The newly formed state was comprised of the Triune Kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia) and of Bosnia and Herzegovina (but excluding Medjimurje, part of Gorski Kotar, the coastal part of Northern Dalmatia between the river Zrmanja and the town of Split, Boka Kotorska and all the islands except Pag, Brac and Hvar). According to the census taken in 1931, the territory of the Croatian State had a total population of 6,042,306; 30.5 % of which (1,845,340) were Orthodox. This does not take into account the above mentioned territorial losses in which the Croatian Catholic population was predominant. The regime of the newly formed state was totalitarian and authoritarian. The head of state, Dr. Ante Pavelic 9 and the Ustasha movement held all the legislative and executive power. Legislation No XXXV-232-Z-1942 of 24th January 1942 re-establishing the Croatian Diet and the convening of the Diet, on the 23rd of February 1942 did not basically change the system of government. Religious matters in the new state came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Religion. The internal organization of this ministry was prescribed by the legislation of the 9th of August 1941. The ministries were divided into departments each with its own special responsibilities. One section only was established at first, but later a Department for Religion headed by Fr. A. R. Glavas. Within the competence of this department was “to regulate the status and legal relations of all religions and their clergy; also religious matters of general/legal
From March 1942 a Committee for Justice and Religion was active in the Diet; a member of this committee was a retired university professor and former vice-ban, the respected writer Dr. Vinko Kriskovic.

The ministerial decree of 18th of July 1941 ruled that the title “The Serbian Orthodox Faith”, which was considered to be at discord with the new state organisation, be replaced with “The Greek- Eastern Faith” as it was called before 1918. By the decree of the 4th of December 1941 “on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia the Julian calendar is abolished from the 5th of December 1941 for the Greek-Eastern and the Greek- Catholic Church and the Gregorian calendar is introduced”.

The official view regarding religious freedom and the status of Orthodox during 1941 could be seen from the speech presented to the Diet by the Minister for Justice and Religion, Dr. Mirko Puk. “On the question of religion, the Croatian government follows the principle which the founder of the Party of Right, Dr. Ante Starcevic (I2), enshrined in the heart and soul of the Croatian people. In his guide for the followers of the party he says in clause 136: the Party of Right must teach the people that religion is a spiritual matter, that no nation can be divided on a religious basis, that religion must be free, that no one can impose his own religion by force, that a nation must be one in happiness, well-being and freedom, and that the present disunity in Croatia is used by the enemies of the people”. After this liberal quotation however, Dr. Puk continues: “The Croatian government recognizes 3 religions in Croatia i. e. the Catholic, Western or Eastern rite, Muslim, and Evangelical of the Augsburg Helvetian confession”. At the end of his speech Dr. Puk referred to “… the Serbian Orthodox and Greek-Eastern Church. The Independent State of Croatia is not persecuting the Greek-Eastern religion, but it can not recognize the Serbian Orthodox Church! It is a known fact that the Eastern Churches belong to the so-called Caesarean Churches i. e. to Churches where religious matters are influenced by the establishment, as in the nomination of Church hierarchies, so that in reality these Churches have no freedom in their structure or Organisation, neither do they function freely but remain organs of the establishment. The head of state is also the head of the Church and it is a known fact that the laity plays a predominant role. Therefore, to allow the formation and existence of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia would mean allowing the government of the Serbian State partly to govern in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia, using the Serbian Orthodox Church. This no country in the world would or could allow, and the Independent State of Croatia will not allow it either. Those who for any reason do not wish to recognize this historic condition are free to leave the territory of this state”.

Dr. Ante Pavelic in his address to the final session of the Croatian Diet on the 28th of February 1942, referred also to the question of Orthodoxy in the Independent State of Croatia with the following words: “Gentlemen! One thing which has so often had its repercussions, both good
and bad, for the Croatian nation and for our Croatian homeland is the question of the Orthodox Church. Not the Orthodox religion but the Church, because there is only one Christian religion. We used to have a Greek-Eastern Church. It was called Greek-Eastern because the Orthodox in our country were under the Greek Patriarch whose chief care for them consisted in receiving high rewards for the anointing of bishops. The same situation also existed in Hungary. Hungarians, however, passed a law by which all Orthodox were made subjects to the Serbian Patriarch. Soon after the Croats copied the Hungarians and the same law was passed in Croatia. In this way the Orthodox came under the rule of the Serbian Patriarch, and the name ‘Serbian Orthodox Church’ was coined. There is no one in Croatia who has anything against the Orthodox faith. Everyone is praying to God according to his own conscience, according to what he has learned in his youth, by his birth, by his schooling and upbringing, and as he thinks best for the salvation of his soul. It is not for us to enter into that most intimate side of human life, into the question of the salvation of the soul. It is not true that the Croatian State aims to convert the Orthodox to the Catholic faith. That is not political. That is left to the individual conscience. I personally wrote a circular which was distributed to the authorities responsible in the provinces and asked them to keep a record of the conversions, not only to Catholicism but also to Islam and to Evangelicalism, and to give permission only when satisfied that the convert is honest and doing it out of conviction. I stressed in the circular that all means must be employed to prevent any kind of force being used by anybody. Despite this, violence was used in some cases but this was not done by the State, or with the approval of the State, but by individuals who acted illegally or, if by officials, then they have overstepped their authority. 15 Gentlemen! No one is touching Orthodox but there is no room for a Serbian Orthodox Church in the State of Croatia. I repeat: there can be no Serbian, can be no Greek Orthodox Church. Why? Because everywhere in the world Orthodox Churches are national Churches. The Serbian Orthodox Church is part and parcel of the Serbian State. The hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church is led by the Serbian State. Its state representatives appoint the Patriarch, or at least participate in his appointment, and all the hierarchy depends on him, from bishop to chaplain. All this is dependent on the Serbian establishment. This is so in Serbia, and has been so in the past in unfortunate Yugoslavia, but it may not and will not be in the Croatian State. World Churches which do not depend on a state could exist in Croatia, and there are such Churches. But if a Church is not a world Church, then it can only be a Croatian national Church, it can only be a Church which has full freedom in the spiritual domain and in freedom of conscience, but in all other matters it must be under the control of the Croatian State. We will never permit any Church to become a political tool, particularly not one aimed against the existence of the Croatian nation and the Croatian State. Therefore, sensible men who care for spiritual things will get together to analyse this question and to find a satisfactory solution for the Orthodox faith, for the welfare of the people, and for the good of the Croatian State” .16

From the address quoted above by the Minister Dr. Puk, and from the address by the Head of the State to the Diet, it will be concluded that the official position which the government of the new state adopted was characterized by the following:
1. To affirm the Croatian nation as a modern and religiously heterogeneous nation, in contrast to the outdated and harmful identification of a nation with a particular religion. 2. In contrast to the liberal views on the question of religion as proclaimed by Starcevic, to adopt totalitarian and authoritarian official recognition of only four religions: Catholic (Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic), Muslim, Protestant Lutheran and Protestant Calvinist. 3. Not to recognize or to tolerate, in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia, the Serbian Orthodox Church as an autocephalous national Church of the Serbian State. 4. To explain that the conversion of a number of Orthodox to Catholicism and the atrocities committed against the Orthodox population under the Ustasha name, had no support from the government nor was it encouraged. 5. To solve the problem of Orthodoxy in a Croatian framework by recognizing an autocephalous Croatian Orthodox Church.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SITUATION IN 1941 PRIOR TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE CROATIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH An unbiased, objective and detailed historical analysis of events in the Independent State of Croatia during 1941 has not yet been written. Neither is it our intention to write one, as this would require a complete book. But, as there is a need to give a concise account of events which influenced the situation of Orthodoxy in the Independent State of Croatia and led to the foundation of the Croatian Orthodox Church, it is necessary to explain and clarify some basic notions. The lack of a clear understanding of these notions prevents a proper analysis of these very complex events, events which were the result of equally complex causes and were made capital of by malicious generalization. It is necessary to explain, first of all, the relationship between modern Serbian and Croatian nationalism, the Catholic/Orthodox relations, and finally the relations between the Chetniks and the Ustaschas.

CONFLICT BETWEEN MODERN SERBIAN AND CROATIAN NATIONALISM Modern Serbian nationalism began to develop at the beginning of the last century in the Belgrade pashalic of the then Turkish territory, mainly under the influence and with the support of the metropolitan see of Karlovci in the Hungaro-Croatian region of Vojvodina and East Srijem. Without a contemporary platform for statehood it took for its basis the ancient Serbian tradition of Dusan’s empire and the death of Tsar Lazar on the Field of Kosovo. On the other hand the lack of a formal, national, cultural and religious centre was substituted for by the metropolitan see of Karlovci, supported periodically by the Russian Church (the Patriarchate of Pec had been denationalized long before and subsequently abolished). The insurrection in the territory of the Belgrade pashalic, of the already decadent Turkish empire, resulted in the creation and subsequent recognition (in 1833) of the Serbian principality with help from tsarist Russia. Islam was eliminated from the territory and the principality became a nationally and religiously homogenous centre for future assembling of lands in which the Serbs lived; also a centre for the Great Serbian imperialism, with expansionist policies into territories with no Serbian population or where the Serbian population was in a minority. These territorial aspirations were based on the desire to renew Dusan’s empire (by conquest of Sanjak, Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro) and the extent of the activities the Pec Patriarchate had had during Turkish rule (Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia excluding a narrow stretch between the river Drava and the Adriatic).
The formation of modern Croatian nationalism had a completely different origin. It was based on the continuity of ancient Croatian statehood, beginning with a principality, later a kingdom (the first king, Tomislav, crowned in 923), preserving its individuality during the time of Hungaro-Croatian Personal Union; on the historic, legalistic and ethnic conception of a Unitary Illyricum (in Dalmatiam, Croatiam, Bosnam et Slavoniam distinguitur), during and after the Renaissance and the autonomous Triune Kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia), within the Hapsburg Monarchy. Although with an apparently solid base for statehood and with traditions in constitutional and legalistic institutions (like ban/viceroy/ and Sabor/Diet/), 19th century Croatia had great weaknesses also. The ruling class, in part denationalised aristocracy, took no part in the contemporary Croatian national movement but strongly resisted it. In addition to this, three centuries of territorial separation (Ban’s Croatia, Military Frontier, Venetian Dalmatia, the Dubrovnik Republic and the territories under Turkish rule), the military zone in the geographical centre of Croatian territory, and migrations, weakened the consciousness of its ancient statehood in some areas. “The Croatian National Awakening Movement” introduced modern national ideas on the unity of the Croatian language and culture (from 1830). But at the same time it ushered in the nebulous ideas of Illyrianism, Slavism, and Yugoslavism. For this reason modern Croatian nationalism was left behind the development of modern nationalism in Serbia, and it was Starcevic and “Pravasta” (the Party of Croatian Rights) who could be considered the founders of modern Croatian political nationalism which had worked, not only in uniting the Military Frontier and Dalmatia with the Triune Kingdom, but also on unification with Bosnia, Herzegovina and Istria.

The conflict between Croatian and Serbian modern nationalism started when nationalist ideas spread, from the region of Zagreb on the Croatian side and from the Novi Sad/Belgrade region on the Serbian side, towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, at that time still in Turkish hands, its population nonawakened nationally; and when the metropolitan see of Karlovci aimed for a definite inclusion of all the Orthodox from the territory of the Triune Kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia) and from Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Serbs. “Pravasta” (the Party of Croatian Rights) resisted this with the modern idea of a multi-religious Croatian nation, but the anti-Croatian regimes of Khuen, Hedervary in Ban’s Croatia, Autonomists in Dalmatia, and Kallay in Bosnia, saw to it that the Serbian equation, Orthodox = Serb, prevailed. This later brought the analogous equation: Catholic = Croat. The Muslims were left mostly unaligned in the middle. A number of Orthodox and Muslims, however, accepted the modern formula propagated by “Pravasi” about the religiously heterogeneous Croatian nation, and that is why there are a number of Orthodox and Muslim Croats; cases of Catholic or Muslim Serbs were exceptionally rare.

CATHOLICISM AND ORTHODOXY Catholicism as a major branch of Western Christianity is the faith of the majority of the Croats and also gave a Catholic character to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It was the religion of the dynasty and of the majority of nations making up
the monarchy: Austrians, Hungarians, Croats, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes and Ukrainians. As a universal Church, Catholicism at that time still aimed to proselytise, but this was founded on a purely voluntary basis. A proof of this was the fact that the privileged position Catholicism enjoyed in Austro-Hungary was not exploited during the last few centuries. There was no proselytization either through persuasion or force. Religious freedom was complete.

The Orthodox Church, as already mentioned, has no unitary organisation like the Catholic Church. In addition to being divided into old and traditional national Churches, Orthodoxy was also adapting itself to the newly formed nations and to the new national states and it often became their main propellant force. On the other hand these newly formed nations and national states encouraged the formation of their own Orthodox Churches to free their citizens from the control of other national Orthodox Churches which were under the influence of foreign states and governments. From these developments it followed that the territory settled by the Croats was a meeting place for three major faiths: Catholic, Orthodox and Islam. While Catholicism and Islam are universal religions, Orthodoxy is divided into a number of national Churches. As the Croats had not founded an autocephalous Croatian Orthodox Church by the time of National Awakening (although in 1861 Kvaternik 18 appealed to ban Sokcevic to found a Church), the Serbian Orthodox Church took its place for the greater part of the Orthodox population among the Croats and at the same time succeeded in winning over to the Serbian cause the majority of the Orthodox population, mainly the already slavonicized and croaticized descendants of the Vlachs. In other words the proselytism of Serbian Orthodoxy among the Croats did not only have a religious character (as in the official Catholic Church) but also had a nationalistic Serbian dimensions, which sometimes led to national intolerance.

THE CHETNIKS AND THE USTASHAS

The Chetniks, a Serbian military Organisation with expansionist aims, was formed in Belgrade in 1903 with the intention of fighting the Turks. Later it was engaged in a war against Bulgarian comitadjis and against the Austro-Hungarian occupying forces during the First World War. Between the two wars (1918-1941) the Chetnik Organisation became an extremist (Great) Serbian monarchist group with the aim of turning Yugoslavia into a Great Serbia by using terror and extermination when necessary to “clear” mixed regions from non-Serbian elements, as for example the purging of Muslims from Sanjak after the First World War. Thus Chetniks became an important element in the persecution of Croats in pre-war Yugoslavia.

The formation and development of the Ustasha movement is described by the historian, Jere Jareb, as follows: “After 1918 the Croatian people found themselves for the first time in a Balkan state where brute force, murders and secretive revolutionary organizations were normal political phenomena. The philosophy behind the formation of the Ustasha movement was the conviction that force must be answered by force. The Ustasha movement was an answer to the (Great) Serbian oppression and to lawlessness in Croatia. For the first time in Croatian politics the
Ustasha movement introduced and applied Balkan political methods. It was necessary to show the Serbs that the Croats also knew how to use guns and to defend themselves and attack. Radic's 19 and Macek's 20 politics of pacifism and humanitarianism only provoked contempt from (Great) Serbs. It is possible that this kind of politics created an illusion and a confidence among the (Great) Serbs, making them believe that it would be easy to finish off the Croats”. E. "Dido" Kvaternik, one of the leading Ustasha functionaries, said this: “Anti Serbian feeling was the essence of the Ustasha doctrine, its raison d’etre and ceterum censeo. This was the result of 20 years of rule by Belgrade in Croatia and of the knowledge that the Serbian ruling establishment wanted to exterminate the Croatian nation. Aleksandar Karadjordjevic21 created Ante Pavelic, Chetniks created Ustashas”.

So when Croatian and Serbian nationalisms came into conflict, the extreme Chetnik and Ustasha organizations came to grips in their own specific way.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE USTASHAS AND THE CHETNIKS IN THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA DURING 1941 AND ITS CONSEQUENCE FOR ORTHODOXY Soon after the Independent State of Croatia was founded, the new government consolidated relatively quickly in those areas which constituted “Banovina Hrvatska” (Ban’s Croatia from 1939 to 1941), and where the majority of the population was Croatian. In those parts of the former Vrbaska Banovina and Drinska Banovina with the compact Serbian districts it took some time for the new administration to consolidate, which gave time to the Chetnik element to amass their arms and prepare the population for an uprising. Already, at the very beginning, excesses took place, committed by Ustashas in those parts of the country where Serbs were in a minority and by Chetniks in those parts with Croat Muslim or Catholic population in a minority. Political gatherings which took place during the months of May and June in 1941 and at which the high Ustasha functionaries harangued against the (Great) Serbs, aggravated the situation. At the same time mass uprisings against the new state were started by the Serbian population in parts of Bosanska Krajina and in East Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized or encouraged by the Chetniks. The minorities under attack either perished or escaped. Croat Muslims and Catholics into the towns and Serbs into the forests. Following the first wave of terrorist excesses, massacres, plunderings, house burnings and the destruction of places of worship (Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim) came retaliations, which caused suffering mainly to the innocent population who had not escaped. Intervention by the authorities was too slow and ineffective because the new administration was only beginning to form and the police stations which had only recently been set up were unable to prevent the mass terrorism. In this situation the Serbian minority in some towns and villages in the Pannonian region lived in fear of reprisals, which caused some to escape to Serbia; while others decided to change their religion from Serbian Orthodoxy to another denomination. In the non- mixed, purely Croatian regions there were no such problems and only after the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union the first communist guerilla units formed. In the meantime the Partisans skillfully exploited the Chetnik/Ustasha conflict for their own aims.
From the above circumstances and from a very brief analysis of events during 1941, which caused the persecutions and the civil war in the mixed regions of the Independent State of Croatia, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1. The presence of three religions (Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim) in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia was not a cause of the persecutions and the civil war. History has shown that peaceful co-existence and tolerance among the three religions in this territory was possible. 2. The conflict between Croatian and Serbian nationalism was not the main cause of the persecutions and the civil war because these conflicts were solved in the past by peaceful means and not by the use of force. 3. It is incorrect to present the events of 1941 as if they were typical for the whole duration of the war, from 1941 to 1945. 4. Conditions were not the same for the whole territory of the Independent State of Croatia. It depended on who were: a) Chetnik or Ustasha leaders, commandants or functionaries. b) In whose hands lay the power (Chetniks, officials of the former Yugoslav government or of the former government of Ban’s Croatia, HSS /Croatian Peasants Party/, Ustashas emigrants, native Ustashas under the oath or self-styled Ustashas, the so called “Nastashas” 22 ). c) Whether the region in question was ethnically mixed or purely Croatian or Serbian. d) Whether the area was in the zone occupied by Italians who supported and aided the Chetniks. e) The degree of a rebellious tradition among the population which depended on the geographical location of that area (whether Pannonian, Dinaric or Littoral). Polemical arguments about “who started first?” are pointless because, depending on circumstances, it was started either in the name of Chetniks or in the name of Ustashas, but always by an irresponsible element.

What then was the main cause for starting the persecutions and civil war in 1941, which in some areas and under specific conditions degenerated from military or semi-military actions to mass reprisals against the civilian population and which the adherents of communism later used for their own aims, stressing the absurdity of this conflict? It was mainly the conflict between the Chetniks and Ustashas. In that conflict all three religions: Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim, suffered and endured persecutions, including massacres, murdering of priests and burning down of churches and mosques. However, neither the Serbian nor the Croatian nation could be collectively blamed for the violence and crimes committed and for the misuse of power, nor could the members of any individual religion, nor could amorphous groups like the Croatian or Serbian nationalists or the members of mass organised movements such as Ustashas and Chetniks, although these were extremist organisations. Only those irresponsible individuals who committed the crimes could be held responsible, but the majority of these unfortunately remained anonymous; even more, some of them later succeeded in joining the Partisan movement.

CASES OF CONVERSION FROM ORTHODOXY TO CATHOLICISM As can be seen from the situation in 1941 the Serbian Orthodox Church, as a Church with a Serbian national character was proscribed, while the Greek- Eastern Church, as the Orthodox Church was renamed and
as it used to be called in the time of the Austro-Hungarian empire, was not officially organised or recognised and remained without a leader. In that way the Orthodox were in fact left without a church organization unless they belonged to another autocephalous Church such as the Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, etc., and in which clergy were available. The formation of the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustasha campaigns against the (Great) Serbs made many of the Orthodox population accept the situation, depending on circumstances (for example, renewal of old loyalty to Croatia among the Orthodox “Krajinsici”) or created a climate of uncertainty (with regard to possible reaction from the persecution of Croats in pre-war Yugoslavia). When it became known that power had been misused and atrocities committed, the Orthodox population in mixed areas and in the towns with Orthodox minorities became fearful, and while some escaped to Serbia, even when not being persecuted, others, on their own initiative, converted to Catholicism, or occasionally Protestantism, to avoid current or possible persecutions. Therefore the phenomenon of groups of Orthodox converting to Catholicism represents a separate chapter in the events which took place in the Independent State of Croatia during 1941. There are three assertions about this phenomenon.

a) Great Serbian and the present official Yugoslav: the conversion took place because the Orthodox population were forced by Ustahas, by the government of the Independent State of Croatia, and even by the Catholic Church.

b) Thesis about conversions as a result of fear: the conversions were not forced, neither were they intended by the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia. The Orthodox population came to the idea and went ahead with it voluntarily and on their own initiative, but it was done out of fear to save themselves from eventual violence.

c) The assertion by Dr. A. Pavelic and Dr. S. Hefer: the conversions followed from the voluntary desire of some of the groups of the Orthodox population to be identified in faith with their Catholic brethren in one Croatian homeland. This would include cases of conversion by some Orthodox to Catholicism out of a conviction that they were returning to the faith of their forefathers. To prove this thesis Dr. Pavelic and Dr. Hefer quoted deputations of Orthodox peasants from the surrounding of Sunja received by Dr. Pavelic, and delegations from the region of the Great County of Baranja (the broader surroundings of Osijek) who were coming to Dr. Hefer.

There is no doubt that the first thesis (a) is incorrect, and that it is propagandist and tendentious for two reasons: 1. The Catholic Church authorities decisively resisted the conversions when it was not clear that the request resulted from the free wish of the applicant. 2. Generally speaking the majority of the Ustasha movement members and their leaders were not particularly
pro-Catholic, nor were they especially anti Orthodox. They were against the (Greater) Serbs and only because of that were they against the Serbian Orthodoxy. This is proved by the excellent relations between the Ustasha movement and the Orthodox Macedonians, Bulgarians, Romanians Ukrainians and Russians before and during the war.

Regarding the theses (b) and (c), it is probable that both of these were followed depending upon whether there were reasons for fear or not. Nevertheless we believe that the cases as described in (b) were more numerous. Only in certain acute cases of persecutions the local Catholic Church authorities allowed the conversions as a quick means of protecting the Orthodox population (and their property) with a view to a later return to Orthodoxy .

Dr. Stjepan Hefer, formally a member of the Croatian Peasant Party and during the war a high official in Osijek and later a minister in the Independent State of Croatia, would often recount that in 1941 whole villages from the Osijek area came in procession under Croatian banners, headed by the cavalry and led by their elders, to be converted to Catholicism. He complained that this was later ruined by the self-styled, or "Wild Ustasha", who started blackmailing and robbing prominent peasant converts.

ORTHODOX CROATS With the problem concerning the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Independent State of Croatia it seems that in 1941 the spiritual needs of the Orthodox Croats were neglected. It is possible that some will try to conclude that the number of Croats of Orthodox faith was very small when taking into account that the great majority of the Orthodox population on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia at that time considered themselves to be Serbs. There were only a few who took into account that, regardless of their number, the Orthodox Croats, following the intensive serbianization of Orthodoxy in Croatia, found themselves torn between their Croatian national consciousness and their religious affiliation which officially came under the domain of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The contribution of these Croats to their homeland, especially before the metropolitan see of Karlovci started openly forcing their equation: Orthodox = Serb, was very important. These are only some of the most prominent personalities: Anastas Popovic (1786-1872), founder of the first Croatian savings-bank, the biggest financial institution in Croatia at that time, and a president of the Orthodox community in Zagreb; Mosije Baltic (1804-78), an eminent promoter of agronomy; Dr. Dimitrije Demeter (1811-72), a poet and the first modern Croatian dramatist; Petar Preradovic (1818-72), the greatest poet of the Croatian National Awakening; Josip Runjanin (1821-78), composer of the Croatian national anthem; Makso Prica (1823-73), a lawyer and politician, secretary to ban (viceroy) Jelacic; Nikola Krestic (1824-87), a politician and president of the Croatian Diet (1873-84); Vladimir Nikolic (1829-66), a poet and a writer; Spiro Dimitrovic Kotoranin (1813-68), a Croatian writer; Bude Budisavljevic (1843-1919), a Croatian writer; Danilo Medic (1844-79), a poet; the Honourable Dr. Ivo Malin Ksaverski (1853-1907), a university professor and a secretary and adviser to the Croatian government; Dr. Gavro Manojlovic (1856-1926), an historian and president of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts; Mojo Medic (1855-1939), a zoologist; Nikola Kokotovic (1859-1917), a writer and politician (Croatian Party of Rights); the Honourable Dr Stjepan Miletic (1868-1908), a
writer and a reformer of the Croatian theatre; Dr. Milan Ogrizovic (1877-1923), a poet and writer and a politician (Croatian Party of Rights); Petar Petrovic Pecija (1877-1955), a Croatian writer; the Honourable Svetozar Borojevic of Bojna (1856-1922), a renowned general from the First World War, and numerous other generals and high officers of the Croatian Home Guard; Dusan Plavsic, a writer and a secretary of “The Croatian Club” in Sarajevo; renowned followers of the Croatian Party of Rights, Dusan Kotur and Dane Stranisavljevic; Stjepan Mitrov Ljubisa, a Member of Parliament; Mihajlo Markovic (1869-1923), an actor; Novak Simic (1906), a Croatian writer; then the Croatian generals and officers of the Second World War, Gen. Fedor Dragojlov and Gen. Djuro Grujic, chiefs of staff in the Croatian army; Gen. Lavoslav Milic, chief of military supplies; Cav. Col. Jovo Stajic; Major Vladimir Graovac, commander of the Croatian air force bomber unit 24 on the Eastern Front; Dr. Savo Besarovic, a Member of Parliament and a minister in the government of the Independent State of Croatia; Uros Doder, a Member of Parliament in the Independent State of Croatia; prominent priests of the Croatian Orthodox Church: Vaso Surlan, Spiridon Mifka, Miron Federer, Sevastijan Peric, Dositej Teodorovic, Amvrosije Veselinovic, Rafail Stanivukovic, etc.

It will be of some interest to mention that the mother of Dr. Ante Starcevic, the founder of modern Croatian nationalism and of the Party of Rights, was Orthodox by birth. Also that the rebels in the Croatian national uprising for the independence of Croatia in Rakovica (in 1872), led by Eugen Kvaternik, were blessed in the local Orthodox church by the priest, Father Popovic, and that the majority of the rebels were Orthodox, including their commander Rade Cuic. It will also be of interest to mention that Patriarch Josif Rajacic, the Metropolitan of Karlovci, enthroned ban (vicerey) Jelacic in 1848. At a reception held by ban Sokcevic in 1861, Eugen Kvaternik had drawn ban’s attention to the existence of the Orthodox Croats and stressed “the need for a Croatian Orthodox Patriarch”. It is possible that the ban’s resignation was the only reason why this idea never materialized. The standpoint of Ante Radic regarding the Orthodox Croats should also be mentioned. He said: “We do not consider that everyone of the Serbian Orthodox faith is a Serb; the mind tells us this, but we can also see it among the people. We have found many peasants of the Serbian Orthodox faith who told us that they are Croats”. In addition to those of the Orthodox faith who declared themselves to be Croats, it should be noted that there were numerous Orthodox who, due to the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, did not declare themselves Croats and considered themselves to be Serbs, at the same time feeling that Croatia was their homeland and that they belonged in the Croatian cultural sphere. Among these are: Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), a renowned scientist who said: “I am a Serb but my homeland is Croatia”; Dr. Pavao Vuk- Pavlovic (1894-?), a university professor, philosopher, and also a number of Croatian writers: Stevan Galogala (1893-1944), Vladan Desnica (1905-57), Milan Nolinc (1921), Vojin Jelic (1921), Cedo Prica (1931), Jovan S. Prica; then the well known artists of the Croatian National Theatre: Miso Dimitrijevic (1854-1909), Mila Jovanovic- Dimitrijevic (1876), Josip Papic (1881-1927), Gavro Savic (1854-after 1910), Zarko Savic (1861-after 1914), Strahinja Petrovic (1892-?) and Dr. Miroslav Pantic, a former Member of Parliament from Bijeljina, and others.
We have listed these concrete examples to show that Orthodox Croats existed and that they still exist and also that there are some Serbs who consider Croatia to be their homeland. The exact number of Orthodox Croats will never be known while the Serbian Orthodox Church has exclusive rights over the Orthodox population in Croatia.

NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT THE FOUNDATION OF THE CROATIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AT THE BEGINNING OF 1942

The development of events during 1941 in the Independent State of Croatia immediately provoked reaction and condemnation by the Croatian public. The Croatian Catholic primate, Archbishop of Zagreb and later cardinal of the Catholic Church, Dr. Alojzije Stepinac, on a few occasions publicly condemned the ferocity of the Ustasha/Chetnik conflicts and its consequences and the disrespect for human life and dignity. Professor Filip Lukas, a president of “Matica Hrvatska” and a Croatian national ideologist (1929-1941) also publicly condemned the lawlessness in his speech at the annual meeting of “Matica Hrvatska” at the beginning of 1942. In the autumn of 1941 Croatian Muslims dissociated themselves publicly from the atrocities with resolutions signed by eminent Muslim citizens in Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka. Responsible men inside the Ustasha movement, especially those with Catholic and liberal orientation (in contrast to those with fascist ideas), after seeing that it was leading nowhere, informed Dr. Pavelic about the whole situation and in some cases returned their membership cards as a sign of protest against the self-styled or “Wild Ustashas”.

Before the end of June 1941 Croatian regular military forces did not exist; the formation of these began only in July 1941 after the Croatian government succeeded in convincing Rome and Berlin of the need to establish a Croatian military force. Only toward the end of the year was a plan drawn up about the formation of “Hrvatsko Domobranstvo”. Croatian Serbs were not called to national service. The Chetniks exploited this and recruited them into Chetnik units. During the first months of 1942 it became clear to the majority of government officials that a dead end had been reached in the guerilla war. Dr. Pavelic then established a headquarters and at the first meeting there the problem of their attitude towards the Serbian minority was raised. According to E. “Dido” Kvaternik all the present members of the government and the representatives of the military forces agreed that the time was right to smooth out the conflict with the Serbs. Dr. Pavelic stressed that the Croatian Orthodox Church would be established as a first step toward this pacification. Shortly after that came the already quoted speech by Dr. Pavelic in Sabor (Diet) on the 28th of February 1942 suggesting this possibility as a solution. The question of establishing the Croatian Orthodox Church was discussed in March 1942 in the Department of Justice and Religion when Dr. Vinko Kriskovic courageously stood for liberal change in the legal status of Serbs in Croatia on the basis of human rights, freedom of confession, ethics and morality.
At that time I was in Srijem. I am a Serb by nationality (not an Orthodox Croat as some believe), born in Belgrade in 1910. My forefathers came from Neuzin in Banat. After qualifying as a lawyer I spent many years in the employment of the Serbian Orthodox Church, first as an apprentice to the judiciary and later as a legal adviser in Srijemski Karlovci. During the war, in April 1941, I was serving in the Yugoslav army as a lawyer with the rank of captain, first class. I succeeded in escaping captivity, but when Srijem was incorporated into the Independent State of Croatia in October 1941 I was imprisoned, and later released after the intervention of my Croatian friends. Before being included into the Independent State of Croatia, Srijem was, like Serbia, under German occupation. In April 1941 the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Gavrilo Dozic, was arrested by the Germans in the Ostrog monastery in Montenegro. For refusing to collaborate with the Germans he was kept in internment for the duration of the war.

In this new situation the synod elected the Metropolitan of Skopje, Josif Cvijovic, to deputize for Patriarch Gavrilo in the territory of Serbia. During that time the Germans took from Srijem part of the Church archives and valuables. Through Metropolitan Josif, who kept in touch with Patriarch Gavrilo, and was his close co-operator, the Patriarch sent a message that, due to the new situation, everything should be done to normalize Orthodox matters in the new Croatian State. Based on that directive, the before-mentioned speech by Dr. Pavelic, and the courageous stand by Dr. Kriskovic in the Croatian Sabor, first contacts were made with the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, through Fr. A. R. Glavas, Secretary of the Department for Religion in the Ministry of Justice and Religion. Since the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia did not want to have direct talks with the Serbian Orthodox Church or with its legal representative, Josif, I was asked, as a layman, to undertake negotiations. Next I was received by Dr. Pavelic three times. In the first meeting, which lasted three and a half hours, we discussed the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church which I drafted on the basis of the Serbian Orthodox Church constitution of the 16th of November 1931, mainly by altering the references from the former state, government and nationality to the new state, government and nationality. Two further meetings were held, mainly for additional revisions and to talk about the candidate who would receive the highest hierarchic position. During the negotiations and discussions I insisted and persevered on the legal and canonical aspects, and these were granted to me. The interest of Dr. Pavelic was concentrated mainly on linguistic and symbolic things, since my knowledge of Croatian literary language and orthography and of Croatian history was inadequate.

During the negotiations in Zagreb I saw that I was being followed and spied upon by certain persons, therefore two bodyguards were assigned to me. It was later found that the Hungarians, the Germans and the English took an interest in the whole affair, hoping to find a political aspect to it, but when they saw that it was only of a religious nature, they lost interest. To the assumption by Fikreta Jelic-Butic that the idea about the Croatian Orthodox Church “probably originated in the first place from the Germans” on account of a report by A. Hefer and a statement by S. Kasche (the German ambassador in the Independent State of Croatia), I have to say that all my activities were carried out exclusively with the Croatian authorities and that there were no indications that the Germans were involved, or that they gave the initiative.
On the 31 of March 1942, on the eve of the Catholic Easter a short “Provision of the law about the Croatian Orthodox Church” was published in the gazette “Narodne Novine” under the number XC-817-Z-1942 signed by the Minister of Justice and Religions, Dr. Mirko Puk, and by the head of state, according to which the Orthodox Church in Croatia was established. Soon after this legal notice the work of organizing the Croatian Orthodox Church started, and the final organization and activities were determined by the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church which came into force on the 5th of June 1942, under the number CLXIV- 1386-Z- 1942. The organization of the Croatian Orthodox Church was, in accordance with its constitution, autocephalous and episcopalian. Its ecclesiastical-hierarchical and autonomous organs were the Patriarch of the Croatian Orthodox Church and the Metropolitan of Zagreb, the Holy Archidiaconal Synod, the High Church Court, the episcopate, the parish church courts, the archidiaconal dignitaries, the priests and the church administrative councils. Administratively the Church was divided into eparchies, archidiaconal regions and parishes. For dogma and canon law the Croatian Orthodox Church was based on the Holy Scriptures and on holy tradition in accordance with the teachings of Holy Orthodoxy and on the canons of the general church synods, and administratively on the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church and on the decisions and orders of the church regions authorized by the constitution.

In addition to formulating and promulgating the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church, the selection of a suitable person of appropriate rank and qualification for the Metropolitan was important, and for this consultation and agreement with several high persons in the Orthodox hierarchy was necessary. While the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church was discussed I made contact with dignitaries who were willing to accept this duty and status and who had all the prerequisite spiritual qualifications. The person who already had the title of Metropolitan, and who responded to the invitation, was the Most Reverend Germogen, the former Metropolitan of Novomoskovsk from Kuban. Metropolitan Germogen, on leaving the seminary, attended the Academy of Theology, became a minister and a parish priest. Later he became professor, and then rector of the Faculty of Theology in Saratov. Married and the father of a large family, he entered a monastery after the death of his wife. Later he became archimandrite and was elected as a deputy bishop in the eparchy of Don. During the First World War he was elected Archbishop of Yekaterinoslav and Novomoskovsk. He left Russia during the Revolution and spent some time in Greece, on the island of Lemnos, and on Mt. Athos. In 1922 he came to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and stayed in the monasteries of Ravanica, Rakovac and, before the Second World War, in the Hopovo monastery in Srijem. According to the constitution of the Croatian Orthodox Church, and in agreement with the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, a patriarch would head the Croatian Orthodox Church in Zagreb. This function however was taken by the Most Rev. Germogen at the rank of Metropolitan, due to the war circumstances. Further arrangements were left for the future. Romanian, Bulgarian and Greek Orthodox Churches, as well as the ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, were notified about the establishment of the Croatian Orthodox Church and of the election of the Metropolitan Germogen. The Serbian Orthodox Patriarch, Gavrilo Dozic, who was in internment at that time, and his deputy, the Metropolitan Josif Cvijovic, were also
informed, unofficially, about the negotiations, and about the eventual outcome. Patriarch Dozic agreed with the election of the Metropolitan Germogen, but was against his being nominated as a patriarch. In this respect he was satisfied. Some were critical about the election of the Metropolitan Germogen on the ground of his advanced age and because of his Russian origin, and wrote about him “being dragged from the Hopovo monastery”. Firstly, the Metropolitan Germogen lived a monastic life and was far from being ambitious; his high spiritual and moral qualifications were beyond question. His acceptance of the highest hierarchic office of the Croatian Orthodox Church was therefore a sacrifice for him. He accepted it only for religious and humanitarian reason. He knew that, because of his age, he would probably never become a patriarch and that it would only be logical to give that office to a native son. His Russian origin was a compromise. The Orthodox priests of Croatian origin were few and the choice among them was therefore limited. On the other hand members of the high Serbian hierarchy still required time to overcome the trauma of the new state and the new situation, while the younger ones, who quickly adapted to the new conditions, could not be taken into consideration for the obvious reason of their youth and lack of experience.

THE ACTIVITY OF THE CROATIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH FROM JULY 1942 TO MAY 1945

On the 7th of June 1942 the solemn enthronement of the Most Rev. Germogen as the Metropolitan of the Croatian Orthodox Church took place in the Orthodox church of the Holy Transfiguration in Preradovic Square in Zagreb, also he took canonical possession of the metropolitan see. On that day the guard of honour and musicians were lined up in front of the church, while within numerous faithful were assembled, with the clergy in solemn vestments. The government was represented by the president of the Croatian State Diet, Marko Dogen, the secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Religion and the Minister of Agriculture, Jozo Dumandzic, the mayor of Zagreb, Ivan Werner, the State protonotary, Dr. Ivan Majcen, the master of ceremonies, Col. Machiedo, the representative of the Zagreb Orthodox community, Mr. Petar Lazic, etc. The Most Rev. Germogen arrived accompanied by his secretary, myself. The act of enthronement was carried out according to the prescribed rite and with the participation of the Orthodox priests, priors Platon, Vaso Surlan, Serafim Kubcevski, Venjamin Pavlovski, Joca Cvijanovic, Miron Federer and archdeacon Aleksej Borisov. Minister Dumandzic delivered a speech and read the decree by the head of state appointing the Most Rev. Germogen as the Metropolitan of the Croatian Orthodox Church with his seat in Zagreb (decree No. 6034-B-1942). In his speech Dr. Dumandzic said that in founding the Croatian Orthodox Church the principle expressed in the Croatian national proverb “The brother is dear whatever his faith” was followed. He also stressed that the Croatian nation had always shown religious tolerance and that for centuries Catholics and Muslim Croats had lived in harmony and love with the Orthodox. “It is certain that they will all equally love in the future their Croatian homeland with which they are closely bound by home and family, by the graves of their forefathers and the cradles of their children, and will remain her faithful sons”. He continued and stressed that the constitution guarantees to the Croatian Orthodox Church wide autonomy and unhindered spiritual activity in accordance with the principles of the Orthodox faith. On the next day, the 8th
of June 1942, the Metropolitan Germogen took his oath. The ceremony was followed by a reception at which the head of state was present, together with the Cabinet headed by Dr. Dzaferbeg Kulenovic and the Metropolitan with his retinue, including myself, as well as the representatives of the Zagreb eparchy and of the Church community, Revv. Joco Cvijanovic Petar Lazic, Djuro Jukic, Teodor Vukadinovic and the Abbot Miron Federer.

The founding of the Croatian Orthodox Church had immediate and very positive results. About 3000 Orthodox detainees were released from various detention camps and prisons (Sisak, Slavonski Brod, etc.) and a number of the priests who had not emigrated to Serbia returned from the detention camp in Caprag to their flock. Orthodox churches which had been closed were immediately reopened. Metropolitan Germogen was personally present at the reopening of churches in Mitrovica, Ruma, Irig and Srijemski Karlovci. Baptisms and weddings took place in large numbers and on occasions up to 200 children were baptised in a single day. In accordance with the constitution, the eparchies of Brod, Sarajevo and Bosanski Petrovac were established, in addition to the metropolitan see of Zagreb. The organization of one in Bosanski Petrovac was not possible due to the guerilla war in that area. Various interventions on behalf of the Orthodox followed, such as one concerning approximately 600 Orthodox reserve officers who were to have been sent into the first firing lines, but were spared, some of them being allowed to return home following an appeal to the Minister, Artukovic, at 1. a. m. Amicable relations with the Catholic and Muslim hierarchies were established. During a two hour meeting with the Archbishop of Zagreb, Croatian Metropolitan the Most Rev. Alojzije Stepinac, close collaboration of the Churches and the ecumenical themes were discussed.

The young priests and clerics in Srijem who were nearing the end of their studies had these courses curtailed and were sent to vacant parishes. These appointments were left exclusively to the hierarchy of the Croatian Orthodox Church and the civilian authorities did not interfere. Where the churches were destroyed or damaged, chapels and small cemetery churches were brought into use as parish churches. On the 10th of April 1943, to celebrate the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia, services were held in Catholic and Muslim places of worship, as well as in the Orthodox churches. Valuable art treasures such as iconostases, screens and icons from damaged or demolished Orthodox churches were transferred to the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb and preserved thanks to the museum staff. The Orthodox calendar was published and prayer-books were printed, free of all political additions; the only difference from those published before the war was that the alphabet was not Cyrillic but Latin. Essential items from that part of the archive which had not been taken by the Germans were brought to Zagreb, where the metropolitan see was now situated. A number of Orthodox priests distinguished themselves in organizing the Croatian Orthodox Church and the newspapers published the following announcement before Christmas 1942: “On the occasion of Christmas His Grace the Metropolitan of Zagreb and of all the Croatian Orthodox Church, the Most Rev. Germogen has decorated the following clergymen for their conscientious service to the Church and to the people: Baton: Archpriest Evgenij Jarlemski and Archpriest Aleksandar Volkovski; Archpriest: priests Vasilije Surlan, Serafim Kubcevski and Anatolije Paradijev; Abbot: priests Sevastijan
Peric and Dositej Teodorovic and priors Amvrosije Veselinovic and Rafail Stanivukovic; Pectoral Cross: Abbot Miron Federer, archpriests Cvjetin Sovic and Risto Babunovic; Red Sash: Archpriest Aleksej Borisov, priests Joca Cvijanovicc Vasilije Jurcenko, Pavie Kozarski, priors Vlasmin Pavlovski, Venjamin Radosavljevic, Mihaiiev Milogradske, Dimitrije, Ivan Mrackovski, Evgenij Pogorecki, Petar Popov, Bogdan Popovic, Cvjetan Popovic, Nikolaj Semcenko, Petar Stefanovic, Sergije Selivanovski, Ljubomir Svrtilic and Emilian Samatico". Spiridon Mifka, the former parish priest in Visoko, was appointed head of the eparchy of Sarajevo in August 1944. This shows that the assertion that the Croatian Orthodox Church was only an "Ustasha's invention" which "consisted of only five or six Russian priests"has no foundation. It is clear that among the above listed prominent clergymen of the Croatian Orthodox Church there were Croats, Serbs, Russians, Ukrainians, Macedonians and Bulgarians, though mostly Orthodox Serbs and Croats, not to mention young priests and those of the lower hierarchic rank. Similarly, the conclusion by Dj. Kasic, in his work Srbi ipravostavlje (The Serbs and the Orthodoxy), that the activity of the "few" Orthodoxy priests in the formation of the Croatian Orthodox Church “was unsuccessful because the Serbs sensed the tendency and, to avoid persecutions, if they were changing their Church, they were more willing to change to the Roman Catholic faith than to join this artificial creation” is completely senseless, since it is well known that after the Croatian Orthodox Church was founded, there was not one conversion to Catholicism, and that a number of those who had changed their confession out of fear returned to the Orthodox faith inside the Croatian Orthodox Church which had been established and was functioning normally.

Conscientious historians will reach the conclusion that the founding of the Croatian Orthodox Church created conditions and an atmosphere in which first steps could be taken towards the reconciliation and reduction of Serb-Croat conflict, and excesses caused by the irresponsible elements. Although the Croatian Orthodox Church was not directly involved in it, the agreement of peace and co-operation was signed between some Chetnik units and the military and civilian authorities of the Independent State of Croatia. After 1942 the civil war was waged mainly between the Partisan communist forces with a predominantly Yugoslav orientation on the one side, and the nationalist Croats, Serbs, etc., on the other. It should also be mentioned that in 1943 the Dora Pukovnije (Domobran labour regiments) were formed, one on the territory of each military district, into which primarily Orthodox Serbs were recruited and those Orthodox Croats from Srijem and Slavonija, who had not previously being called to military service The idea was gradually to create mutual trust between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox citizens, Croats and Serbs, in the military field.

I remained in the service of the Metropolitan Germogen as his secretary until the middle of 1944, when a misunderstanding arose between myself and a few of the Orthodox in Zagreb. To prevent conflict I decided to resign, and left for Backa, which was at that time ruled by Hungary. The end of the war found me in Novi Sad, where I was at first arrested, and later released, when I explained the religious and humanitarian motives which led me to partake in the founding of the Croatian Orthodox Church. Later I emigrated. Some prominent communists from Vojvodina, later to become high functionaries, and a minister who was imprisoned in 1941/42,
all of whom owed their lives to the formation of the Croatian Orthodox Church, intervened on my behalf when I was arrested in 1945.

Metropolitan Germogen, already 85, did not retreat to the West at the end of the war when the Independent State of Croatia was abolished, and was arrested by the new Partisan authorities in May 1945, together with the Archpriest Aleksej Borisov. Both were executed. I believe that this was done by the Great Serbian fanatic, chauvinist and non-communist elements, as it can not be explained why true communists would be interested in religious hierarchical problems and in revenges of a religious nature. In my opinion a great mistake was made by the new authorities for allowing this crime to happen. Prominent priests of the Croatians Orthodox Church who did not succeed in escaping were subjected to heavy persecutions and almost all of them lost their lives.

From the history of the Croatian Orthodox Church, presented above, it is clear that the numerous articles which have dealt with this subject are wrong and untrue. For example, in the entry Ustashas in the Yugoslav Encyclopaedia, historian Ljubo Boban states; “The idea was to reduce the number of the Orthodox population by converting a part of that population to Catholicism. But the forcible conversions of Serbs to Catholicism brought no results, as the manipulation of the Croatian Orthodox Church, a creation of the Ustashas of April 1942, brought no results”. This uncritical and confused assertion by Boban, who is mixing religious and national notions, is unworthy of the historian he later became. He talks of reducing and converting to Catholicism the Orthodox population, although it is known that the aim of the Ustashas attack, in 1941, was not directed against the Orthodox faith (Ustashas were indifferent to it) but against the Serbs, primarily against the Great Serbs and only through them against Serbian Orthodoxy. Boban says that “the forcible catholicizing of Serbs” (now he talks about the Serbs and not about the Orthodox) and “the manipulation of the Croatian Orthodox Church gave no results”. If “catholicizing” (which in a majority of cases was not forced but requested and accepted by some Serbs out of fear, in seeking for protection, or in a desire to equalise with the majority) did not succeed (which is true), then we can be grateful to the “manipulation” of the Croatian Orthodox Church and to its success, not failure, because when the Croatian Orthodox Church was founded the conversions to Catholicism instantly stopped, and a large majority of those who had changed their religion returned to the Orthodox faith within the Croatian Orthodox Church.

The commentary by the high ranking Ustasha functionary E. “Dido” Kvaternik about the Croatian Orthodox Church is tendentious and untrue when he says: “The Orthodox Church was established as the Croatian Orthodox Church with a pure anti-Catholic tendency. A Russian, not a Serb, was appointed its head. It was the Russo-Croatian Orthodox Church which did not appeal to the Serbs”. If Orthodoxy ever had a problem in Croatia it was during 1941, because of the conflict between the Ustashas and Chetniks. One of the leading exponents of the conflict
was “Dido” Kvaternik on the Ustasha side. The formation of the Croatian Orthodox Church and its relationship with the Catholic Church in Croatia shows that the Croatian Orthodox Church was not established with “anti-Catholic tendencies”, neither was its intention to “attract” the Serbs. It was a solution to the problem of professing the Orthodox faith on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia for all the Orthodox Serbs, Croats, Ukrainians, Russians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, etc., since the activity of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Church of the neighbouring state of Serbia, was not allowed. The Croatian Orthodox Church was multi-national in the composition of its followers and hierarchy. A relatively moderate book by Pavle Ostovic also contains the following untruth: “Horrible cruelties were unleashed upon the innocent population, only for being Orthodox”. The best answer to P. Ostovic is given by his party leader, Dr. Vlatko Macek, in his book28: “The best proof that the Ustashas did not persecute the Serbs for religious reasons is that they themselves founded the Croatian Orthodox Church in 1942, headed by a Russian emigrant bishop”.

RETROSPECTIVE CONCLUSIONS

From a survey of the history of Orthodoxy among the Croats, as described above, it could be concluded that, following the split of Christianity, the Croats remained in the Western and the Serbs in the Eastern Church, and the present day Montenegrins (Dioclea, Zeta), partly in the Western and partly in the Eastern Church. With the expansion of the Serbian State during the rule of Nemanjics, the Catholics from the present day East Herzegovina and from Montenegro (ancient Red Croatia) were driven to a narrow stretch along the coast up to the Republic of Dubrovnik and to the Kotor- Montenegro Littoral.

The Turkish thrust into Croatia in the 15th century and the two hundred years of a war zone in the middle of Croatia, (Turkish Croatia)29, resulted in a number of Croats converting to Islam, and in the settlement of the ravaged and abandoned lands of central Croatia by the Orthodox population from the Balkan hinterland, mainly by the migratory Vlachs, herdsmen and peasants, people of Roman origin. This was the reason why the Croatian lands, religiously and ethnically homogeneous prior to the Turkish invasion, became intermingled both religiously (Catholics, Orthodox, Muslim) and ethnically (Croats, Vlachs and various other Balkan nationalities).

With Serbians migrating north at the beginning of the 18th century (Srijem, Vojvodina and Southern Hungary) a large compact group of Serbs of Ekavian speech came to the Croatian territory, together with the retreating Serbian Orthodox Church (the metropolitan see of Karlovci) which in the course of the two following centuries succeeded in gaining hierarchical control over the Orthodox Vlachs and the Croats, and in the 19th century in the serbianization of the major part of them, simply by using the equation: Orthodox = Serb. In this way the religious mosaic in
the central Croatian regions also became an ethnic mixture of Croats and Serbs. To this the modern Croatian nationalism of Starcevic responded by advocating the idea of Croats as a multi-religious nation of Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims. The identification with Orthodoxy prevented the Serbs from forming a multi-religious nation, while among the Croats there are Catholic Croats, Muslim Croats and Orthodox Croats, the latter being subordinated in religious matters to Serbian Orthodoxy.

The conflict between the modern Croatian and the modern Serbian nationalism originated in the mixed areas claimed by the (Great) Serbians, and by the Croats, on the basis of historical rights. In pre-war Yugoslavia the tension increased, resulting in Serbian domination of that state. With the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941 the conflict between the extreme nationalistic organisations, the Ustashas and the Chetniks, began in the mixed areas. In this conflict the irresponsible elements under the Chetnik or Ustasha banners started persecuting the minority groups and in the process all three denominations suffered - Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam. Since the government of the Independent State of Croatia did not recognize the Serbian Orthodox Church as it was a national Church of Serbs and of the neighbouring state of Serbia, Orthodoxy in Croatia was left without leadership in 1941. The problem was solved in 1942 by founding the Croatian Orthodox Church.

On the basis of the above analysis and from our personal participation in the events we conclude, taking into account all the difficulties, that the existence of the Croatian Orthodox Church, from 1942-45, was positive for all the Orthodox Serbs, Croats and other nationalities on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia, from a religious and from a humanitarian standpoint. Also in reconciling and reducing the Croato-Serbian conflict caused by past mistakes and by the Ustasha/Chetnik conflict. In this way, after 1941, the conflict between them was reduced, and in some areas agreement was reached. For the Orthodox Serbs, the Croatian Orthodox Church offered a security and a temporary religious solution under an authoritarian regime which did not tolerate the Serbian Orthodox Church, a national Church of the Orthodox Croats the Church was a long desired but hitherto prevented solution for their dilemma: their Croatian national feelings and loyalty for their Croatian homeland on the one side, and the only Orthodox Church in Croatia, which was exclusively Serbian national, on the other.

It is to be regretted that, due to the short-sighted attitude of some Great Serbian chauvinists in Croatia, the abolition of the Croatian Orthodox Church was not prevented and the Church left to continue with a revised constitution (of course for those Orthodox who wanted to remain), in the first place for Croats of Orthodox faith, regardless of their number. This does not mean that a reestablished Serbian Orthodox Church could not have coexisted with the Croatian Orthodox Church for the Orthodox of Serbian nationality, as full religious freedom means toleration and coexistence, not exclusiveness and monopoly of Churches.
It appears absurd, yet it should be mentioned, that a communist system was biased to such an extent regarding the existence of the Croatian Orthodox Church that it took a standpoint of militant intervention for the exclusiveness of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as the only Orthodox Church, on the territory inhabited by Croats and Serbs in Croatia and against the toleration and coexistence of various Orthodox Churches. This was later corrected with regard to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but the idea of centralized Orthodoxy unfortunately still prevails in the rest of Yugoslavia. Anyone of the Orthodox faith who is neither a Serb nor a Macedonian, and that means a member of any other nationality in Yugoslavia (Slovene, Croat, Montenegrin, Albanian, Ukrainian, etc.) may profess his Orthodox faith only as a member of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Past experience and present day events are teaching us that the delicate problems of religion and nationality should be solved while there is still time, not when they have erupted with full violence. The intolerant Great Serbian exclusivity by which all the Orthodox in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina are only Serbs, and the quixotic assertions, by some Croatian emigrant circles, that all the Orthodox in Croatia are only Croats, is not realistic. On the territory of these republics there are Orthodox Serbs as well as Orthodox Croats. The exact number will be known only when there is an atmosphere of full religious and national freedom.

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

The history and development of Orthodoxy in Croatia, the recent troublesome and tragic experiences, the fate of the Croatian Orthodox Church and the still unresolved problem of freedom to confess the Orthodox faith in Croatia, frustrated by the exclusive territorial rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia, should be a reason for concern to all those who have responsibility, so that at critical moments in the future the same mistakes are not repeated. It is difficult to understand why the Serbian Orthodox Church holds firmly to its acquired rights in Croatia and prevents a normal development of free confession of the Orthodox faith and the existence of other Orthodox Churches. If an Orthodox Church for the Croats, for the non-Serbian Orthodox and for those Serbs who have freely joined it, would be small in number beside a big Serbian Church, then we can not see why there is a need for the Serbian Orthodox Church to be afraid, particularly if the Orthodox Church in Croatia does not claim exclusive territorial rights. There is a great need to establish an Orthodox Church in Croatia with a general non-Serbian character. That Church does not have to be a new edition of the Croatian Orthodox Church, founded in difficult war circumstances under an authoritarian regime, which was, to a certain extent, reflected in the set up of the Church. It could be founded either on the model of the Macedonian Orthodox Church i.e. through the territorial separation from the Serbian Orthodox Church; or as a new ecclesiastical unit next to the Serbian Orthodox Church in
Croatia, formed simply on the basis and on the example of the separation between the church and state and the state constitution which guarantees freedom of confession. The first steps to be taken are a) the education of a new generation of priests in the Macedonian, or any other Orthodox Church, since the pre-world war generation of Croatian Orthodox priests of the Greek-Eastern right are already dead, and the three years of activity of the Croatian Orthodox Church was unable to raise a large number of priests; b) setting up of a committee to found the new Church; c) finding a cathedral for establishing the Zagreb archdiocese; d) organization of an ecclesiastic national council to elect the archbishop and to draft the constitution, which would decide, among other things, the name of the new Church. Such a Church, like any other Orthodox Church, would not be monopolistic and would represent no danger to anyone, since the government would always have the last word with regard to those activities which were not of a religious nature, or were in conflict with the constitution.

NOTES

1 Red Croatia: approximately the area of the Herzegovina and parts of Montenegro along the coast.

2 Ijekavian-Stokavian: the Croatian language comprises three dialect groups distinguished by their respective words for “what?”: sto, ca and kaj. Hence the names of these dialects: Stokavian, Cakavian and Kajkavian. Another classification of Croatian dialects is made on the basis of the triple development of the Common Slavic sound “jat”: e, i, (i)je. Hence the names Ekavian, Ikavian and (I)jekavian. Whereas the Serbian literary language is stokavian and Ekavian, the Croatian literary language is Stokavian and (I)jekavian.

3 Bosanska Krajina: the region between the rivers Una and Vrbas.

4 Banska Hrvatska: the area that remained of Croatia following the Turkish invasion and the Venetian annexation of Dalmatia; under the jurisdiction of the ban (viceroy) and Sabor (the Croatian Diet).

5 Vojna Krajina (Military Frontier): that region of Croatia forming a military defence zone established to contain Turkish raids; outside of ban’s jurisdiction.
6 According to the census of 1971.

7 Dalmatian or Byzantine Theme (province): the cities of Zadar, Trogir, Split, Dubrovnik and Kotor and the island of Krk, Osor (Cres and Losinj) and Rab, ruled by the Byzantium in the early Middle Ages.

8 Praveslavlje (The Orthodoxy), Encyclopaedia of the Lexicographical Institute, Vol. 5, LZ, Zagreb, 1969.

9 Dr. Ante Pavelic (1889-1959), founder of the nationalist Ustasha organization in 1931; leader of the Independent State of Croatia from April 1941 to May 1945.

10 Spomen-knjiga prve obijetnice Nezavisne Drzave Hrvatske 10. 4. 1941. - 10. 4. 1942. (Book of Remembrance to commemorate the first anniversary of the Independent State of Croatia, 10 April 1941 to 10 April 1942), State Office for Information and Publicity, Zagreb, 1942.

11 Ibid.

12 Dr. Ante Starcevic (1823-1896), Croatian politician, founder of the Party of Rights.

13 As footnote 10.

14 As footnote 10.

15 The existence of this circular is attested by the Archbishop Stepinac in his letter to Dr. Pavelic, dated 20th of November 1941, in which the circular of 30th of August 1941 is
mentioned and in which the Archbishop says: “You have yourself publicly denounced the atrocities committed by the individuals who called themselves Ustashas and whom you have ordered to be shot for their crimes. Your resolute stand to bring order and justice to the land deserves to be fully acknowledged”.

16 As footnote 10.

17 Croato-Hungarian personal union, also known as “Pacta Conventa”: an agreement from 1102 by which Croatia became an associated or autonomous kingdom under the suzerainty of the Hungarian crown.

18 Eugen Kvaternik (1825-1871), Croatian politician; with Ante Starcevic co-founder of the Party of Rights; in 1871 attempted and unsuccessful uprising in Rakovica, Croatia.

19 Stjepan Radic (1871-1928), Croatian politician; with his brother Ante co-founder of the Croatian Peasant Party in 1904; shot and mortally wounded in the Belgrade Parliament.

20 Dr. Vlatko Macek (1879-1964), Croatian politician; Radic’s successor as leader of the Croatian Peasant Party; died in exile in the USA.

21 Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, king of Yugoslavia; assassinated in Marseilles in 1934.

22 As the Ustasha movement was not numerous before the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia, in many regions there were no organized Ustashes from pre-war times. If the Croatian Peasant Party was weak, or even non-existent, in certain areas of the new state, this allowed irresponsible elements to wear the Ustasha uniform and to declare themselves Ustashes. These undisciplined self-styled and self-appointed Ustashes were of a dubious character and Ustasha authorities named them “Wild Ustashes” or “Nastashes” and did all in their power to eliminate them, including executions for crimes.
23 Dr. V. Macek in his book In the Struggle for Freedom says that the communists did not investigate the reasons why Catholic priests accepted converts, but persecuted them for that. “Notably in the case of a priest from Sarajevo who said to the Orthodox converts: ‘Children, your mother, the Orthodox Church, is in distress and is unable to take care of you. You came to the Catholic Church, your aunt, and when your mother has recovered you will return to her.’ As a reward the priest was sentenced to death after the war”.

24 While at the explicit request of Dr. Macek, the vice-president of the Yugoslav government, Col. Ivan Prpic was promoted to the rank of a general, as the only Croat with that rank in the Yugoslav army before the war, the Orthodox officers held the highest positions in the Croatian Army during the war, including the three mentioned generals. Even among the Ustashas there were officers of the Orthodox faith, as for example Lieutenant Markovic.

25 Hrvatsko Domobranstvo (Croatian Homedefence Force): the Croatian regular military force.

26 I remember Fr. Glavas with great affection. It was clear from the outset that he was a very cultured and refined man (in addition to being a priest he was also a teacher and a literary critic). He sincerely wished to solve the problem of Orthodoxy in a correct way and to everyone’s satisfaction. He said that as the Catholic Church did not like state interference into ecclesiastical matters, so in the same way the state should not interfere with other confessions. It is to his credit, that the authorities were not involved, to a great extent, in the nominations for the Croatian Orthodox Church. Feeling no guilt he did not retreat in May 1945 but his name is on the first list of those executed by the Partisans in Zagreb.


29 Turkish Croatia: north-western Bosnia between the Una and Vrbas rivers.