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**THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY
ZAGREB DEFENSE AND PROTECTION COMMAND, CROATIAN
ARMED FORCES, 1991-1993**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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According to Directive for A.Y. 2000 and Communicative Arts Program I describe the organization of Zagreb Defense and Protection Command (ZOGZ) led by myself during the period from 1991 until 1993. This project consists of several chapters about dramatic events that occurred in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Zagreb, the Croatian capital. The main portion of this essay is based on my personal experience and insights from that period of time. The democratic changes in Croatia are explained in a separate chapter. The creation and development of the Croatian Army in Zagreb is described as well as the development of the ZOGZ and its subordinate military units. The basic organization and structure of the ZOGZ as well as main responsibilities of that Command are also covered in a separate part of essay. A brief explanation of the origins of Croatian independence and the defensive period of the Homeland War are the topic of one section of this project.

Significant differences between the former Yugoslav Army and the newly formed Croatian military are the focus of one portion, as well. Finally, I summarize and offer short conclusions that explain the importance of these events for Croatia and her military.

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THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY ZAGREB DEFENSE AND PROTECTION COMMAND, CROATIAN ARMED FORCES, 1991-1993

At the end of 1980's and the beginning of 1990's the situation in the former Yugoslavia started changing rapidly and dramatically. The fall of the Berlin wall, the breakdown of the former Soviet Union and democratic pressures that were coming from both west and east had an strong impact on the events that radically changed the future of five nations and over 35 national minorities that lived in the six republics of the former Yugoslavia (SFRJ): Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia as well as two autonomous regions: Vojvodina and Kosovo.

The leaders of the former Yugoslavia reacted differently to the changes they were facing. Slovenia and Croatia, two western republics that were strongly connected to the west before they entered first Yugoslavia in 1918, prepared themselves for the future democratic changes. On the other hand, Serbian leaders, supported by communist leaders from Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo, were trying to stop these unavoidable changes. That was impossible to do.

This essay describes the genesis of the Croatian Armed Forces in the capital of Croatia, Zagreb, in the aftermath of the first free and democratic elections held in April and May of 1990. The subsequent parts of the essay offer a brief explanation of democratic changes in Croatia and the events that took place after the first elections. They also describe the organization and development of the Croatian Armed Forces in Zagreb. The next part of the essay presents the creation of the Zagreb Defense and Protection Command (ZOGZ) with subordinate military units as well as a description of the aggression on the Republic of Croatia until the Sarajevo peace agreement (January 1992).

At the end of this essay a brief analysis of the role of the military in democratic society is given. The main part of the essay is based on my personal experience when I was the Commander of the ZOGZ during the period of the birth of the Croatian Armed Forces. That experience was the most important part of my military career because of its historical meaning that is described in this essay. Despite being one of the oldest European nations, the Croatian people were unable to permanently maintain its own statehood. Ironically, the Croatian people had better opportunities to achieve independence than in 1990's, but they failed to seize the moment. The majority of the Croatian people accepted the chance that came in 1991 and believed that in the future Croatia would become a member nation in a democratic, stable Europe.

DEMOCRATIC CHANGES IN CROATIA (FORMER YUGOSLAVIA) IN 1990

The former SFRJ Constitution from 1974 gave the citizens of all the republics the right to organize elections and decide their own future. In 1989 the Croatian communist's leaders, concerned by the spreading of Serbian nationalism and hegemony, organized the first free elections in Croatia. In the wake of this decision the new political parties started to form and more than 50 were formed by the elections of 22nd and 23rd April 1990.

Considering the fact that forming political parties was forbidden until 1989, this development reflected the irresistible, strong national movement of this moment of time. Millions of people had sought social changes for decades but as the danger of Serb aggression increased, their hopes now focused on fighting for and forming an independent republic. A national movement spontaneously developed and many new political parties emerged as a result of this in 1989 and 1990. The entire nation aspired to resist aggression, as well as to create a true Croatian democracy. That was the first time in Croatian history that all political factions had the same goal. That unity would later be confirmed during the Homeland war in which the entire nation was united in fight for freedom.

The Serbian and Yugoslav National Army (JNA) supposedly wanted to protect Serbs in Croatia but they actually wanted to occupy parts of Croatian territory where Serbs lived. During the pre-election campaign the Croatian citizens supported the side that was promising the defense of Croatia and getting out of Yugoslavia. The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) resolutely expressed the feelings of Croatian people, supporting the importance of independence and liberty of the people. It turned out to be a successful message; HDZ won the elections and the leader of the HDZ, Dr. Franjo Tudjman, became the first Croatian President. A new Parliament was formed on May 30, 1990, a day later became known as the Day of Statehood.

In the other republics of former Yugoslavia the elections were held through the end of 1990. In Slovenia opposition parties won on April 8, 1990 but Slovenian communist's leader Milan Kucan became elected president. That actually helped Slovenia to have more stability during the transition period. In Macedonia opposition parties won on November 11, 1990 and former communist leader Kiro Gligorov was elected president. He used his communist-era experience in top positions in the former Yugoslav federation to save his country from attack in 1992. During the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on November 18, 1990 an unprecedented situation developed. The citizens voted strictly according to ethnicity: Croats for Croatian Democratic Union, Serbs for Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and Muslims for Muslim Democratic Action (SDA). During this period of elections the communists won in only Serbia and Montenegro, an obvious sign that the majority of people in these republics supported the communist led movement for a Greater Serbia. The results of these elections hastened Yugoslavia's breakup. The Serbs from Serbia, other parts of former Yugoslavia, including leaders in the JNA and federal institutions interpreted the elections in Slovenia as its way to get out of Yugoslavia and the elections in Croatia as a victory of a profound nationalism.

The Serb leaders resisted the right of the republics to decide their own future through democratic elections. The non-Serb peoples of Yugoslavia decided Serb domination was over. Simultaneously, Serbian leadership used the election results as a message and the invitation for their own people to commit all in a war to maintain Serb power and influence.

According to the Memorandum about Greater Serbia, parts of Croatia settled by Serbs responded by rioting against the new Croatian government. In those districts where Serbs lived as the majority they declared autonomy and refused loyalty to the new government of Croatia. They put local administration

and police units under their control with the help of local governments from the socialist era. The first Serbs riot took place on August 17, 1990 in Knin and continued through 1991 in Lika, Kordun, Banija, Slavonija, Baranja and Western Srijem where they formed so-called Serbian autonomous regions which separated from Croatia and joined Serbia and Yugoslavia.

All these events led to the independence of the republics of former Yugoslavia. Relations and connections between them were getting increasingly weak and finally they had nothing with each other. On July 25, 1990, the word "socialist" was no longer part of the name of Republic of Croatia and it got new flag and coat of arms. A new Croatian Constitution was passed on December 22, 1990 and a semi-presidential system was established. In all the republics preparations for war continued. The former JNA started turning into a Greater Serbian imperial force. Military officers from other nations were moved from important positions or fired. War was imminent and Serbia attacked Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. Fighting for survival started and the former Yugoslavia had fallen apart in the blood of its own people who were thwarted in their desire to peacefully manage their future.

CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CROATIAN ARMY IN ZAGREB, THE CROATIAN CAPITAL

In Zagreb, the Croatian capital, a new City Government was established right after the elections and inauguration of the new State Government, Parliament and President of Republic. Personnel changes in most of the branches of the city government, especially in the defense branch, were made in the summer of 1990. A new head of Defense Department of the City of Zagreb and 14 heads of District defense offices were assigned. Those defense offices were responsible for organization and execution of mobilization reserve units, sending conscripts to military service, organization of civilian protection and related defense duties.

During this time the territorial defense (TO) system consisted of Croatian reserve units, staffs and commands, who were responsible to the former SFRJ by law. Significantly, the representation of officers, NCO's and command personnel was different than the former Constitution and Defense law described. Although 92 percent of the population in Zagreb was Croats, the percentage of military officers in TO was 70 percent Serbs and 30 percent of others. According to Defense law order, the percentage of soldiers should have matched the city's population (92% of Croats and 8% of others). The TO staffs consisted of professional fulltime employees while everybody else in TO were reservists. In Zagreb the TO was organized into a City Staff and four subordinate Sector staffs responsible for a few districts. Sector staff "South" that I worked in until 1990, was the only one with a majority of Croats (55-60%). Serbs and so-called Yugoslavs were the majority of personnel on all the other staffs. Employees of all staffs were civilians paid by local municipality and only a small part of them were from professional JNA units. TO units were both territorial and maneuver. Maneuver units were TO brigades, one in each of the 14 districts in Zagreb, and were commanded by active officers of the JNA temporarily assigned to the TO. Territorial units were organized as squads, platoons, companies and sometimes battalions and consisted completely of reservists trained for the defense of their own territory.

Each local municipality had an obligation to pay for this semi-military system over which it had no influence. The new local Governments that paid for the TO system sought a solution for this impossible situation. This was a period of intense confusion because the defense law from the former Socialist Republic of Croatia was still valid and offered certain advantages as well as glaring disadvantages. At this point I saw a unique chance to support the independence of Croatia and resist the ideas about Greater Serbia. I decided to use all my knowledge and abilities to help the newly elected democratic government.

In July of 1990 I developed my first analysis of the situation in the TO with recommendations for improvement and required changes. I secretly sent it to the new Defense Minister and the new Head of Defense Department of Zagreb. Subsequently, in February 1991, local Parliament of Zagreb, with some modifications to my original plan decided to reorganize the TO system in Zagreb. During the next session of the local Parliament of Zagreb, at the suggestion of the Defense Minister, I was assigned as the new Commandant of the City Staff of TO in Zagreb (later ZOGZ). On that day, April 4, 1991, after more than eight months of secret activities, preparations for the organization of the armed forces in Zagreb started. Other Croatian cities and districts immediately followed that example.

After the media broadcast of my appointment, friends and supporters from TO and outside started to offer their help and cooperation. However, the Republic Staff of TO (RSTO) that was run by the active officers of JNA referred to my appointment as illegal. Threats of physical coercion and jail followed. The RSTO organized a few completely unsuccessful meetings and tried to persuade the civilian employees (176 civilians) to continue their support of the RSTO. At the same time these active officers of JNA employed in TO solve their own personal status by return to the payrolls of the JNA and leaving their civilian colleagues with no support.

Right after a brief but thorough preparation conducted with a few confident assistants in the middle of April 1991, I organized a meeting with all the employees from the former TO staffs. All of them came and signed their loyalty to the newly elected democratic Government of Croatia, which would make the reorganization of the TO system in Zagreb easier. The personnel decisions that followed were not simple and they were painful for the employees that were not needed. That was the way we had to solve problems made during these challenging years. Personnel decisions were made by evaluating the abilities of each employee and not by ethnicity, as expected. But that was possible to do because I personally knew almost every one of the 176 employed civilians and after 7 years of working in the former TO I was able to evaluate the possibilities of each individual objectively. Beside that I had access to their previous evaluations. Finally, 65 new employees were selected for the new Command. Twelve of the others were retired in a dignified way and the others had the right to have payments during their transition period (6-9 months depending on how long they served in former TO) and after that they had to find new job. Some of them later joined the Croatian Army.

Other requirements for the ZOGZ were worked at the same time as the personnel changes. During the first few weeks we worked at the temporary location given by Zagreb local Government, but soon we moved to our final location and started to organize on a proper level. The weapons that the TO

possessed and kept in its own dumps were put under our control and maintenance immediately. All the other weapons that were in former JNA dumps were occasionally checked until the JNA and RSTO forbade this in early summer of 1991. The RSTO was finally shut down in July 1991 although it worked directly against interests of Republic of Croatia throughout this time. Preparations for the creation and development of the Croatian Army in Zagreb started very fast even though the JNA was still present. Initial preparations were made according to laws of former SFRJ but after the aggression on the Republic of Croatia it was clear to see that Yugoslavia stopped existing thus these laws were no longer complied with. Former JNA leaders did not understand the exact role of military in Yugoslavia. In the decisive moments when the republics of former SFRJ, following constitutional rights written in Constitution from 1974, were deciding their future, the JNA had a perfect chance to play a democratic role. However, the JNA leadership strongly controlled by Great Serbian nationalism chose a different way. Using the excuse of caring for so-called threatened Serbs but really intent to expand in the parts of Croatia where Serbs lived, nationalist JNA started to carry out its sick and bloody plan. Everything left from former Yugoslavia, mainly the Chairmanship of the SFRJ, had no longer any control of the Army. On the contrary, the Army started taking control of politics. Armed force became the priority of all decisions, which led to the breakdown of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the Croatian Army gathered volunteers from all the levels of society. Intellectuals, workers, teachers, medical personnel, managers, engineers, musicians and other cultural workers and all the other people aware of the historical chance of creating a free democratic Croatia supported the making of the Croatian Army. The ZOGZ was probably the best example of that diversity, but that was not a surprise considering the great deal of potential in the population of Zagreb, the Croatian capital.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE ZAGREB DEFENSE AND PROTECTION COMMAND

By the spring of 1991 everybody was aware that aggression against Croatia was going to happen. The ZOGZ prepared its personnel for action and began the reorganization of the entire defense system in Zagreb. Our first goal was to create and develop a capable command and make it ready for two main tasks:

1. Mobilization and equipment of units and their deployment and employment all over the Croatia (Force provider), and
2. Direct command of defense forces in its own zone of responsibility near Zagreb.

Logistic and personnel preparations in all subordinate units should have been made first. However, the Croatian Ministry of Defense and Command of National Guard were just formed and they did not have clear idea about main organizational issues, which resulted in a partial loss of time. By June of 1991 the approved structure documents (formation books) for the first 4 National Guard brigades were signed and given to us to use. All needed preparations of those brigades were done by the end of August. At the same time we prepared 10 more light infantry brigades for mobilization. Those 10 brigades were

smaller than Guard brigades, according to formation books approved in early August 1991. Supporting units, mostly battalions, companies and platoons, were formed during the same period of time. The following support branches were covered: artillery, air defense units, engineer, communications, NBC defense, electronic warfare and special units. Armored forces were formed later, in September and October of 1991.

The new ZOGZ command was consisted of following:

- Commander
- Chief of Staff
- Operations section
- Mobilization section
- Logistic section
- Security section
- Garrison section.

A few other sections were later organized and filled using reserve officers: Support section, Information and public affairs section and Intelligence section. Some of active sections later turned out not to be undermanned and were expanded with reservists. That was mostly the case of Mobilization and Logistic sections. Those two sections worked under the hardest pressure during the summer of 1991 and my opinion is that they had the critical tasks. All the other sections provided important support in making mobilization of units under ZOGZ's command possible.

Subordinate units were organized as follows:

- 14 Infantry brigades,
- Support units (artillery, engineer, communications, NBC defense, electronic warfare, air defense),
- Special units (MP, reconnaissance, anti commando units, parachutists, diving units),
- Information support (Croatian Music Aid, Information affairs platoon),
- 4 Sector Staffs TO, as territorial component,
- Other units.

Because of a shortage of weapons our main activities were mobilization, personnel and operational preparation of the new brigades. Support units had similar problems. Territorial units and Sector Staffs were prepared for mobilization but only Sector Staff "South" mobilized a significant amount of units due to direct contact with the enemy. All other sectors activated only partial forces while Sector Staff "Center" did not mobilize any units.

During the aggression of JNA on the Republic of Slovenia in June and July of 1991 we had the first test of preparations that were made. The first two brigades were mobilized partially and had a mission to stop JNA forces from coming to Zagreb. That mobilization showed a lot of difficulties. The main difficulties

were mobilization problems, logistic and shortages of certain kinds of equipment as well as the ability to operate securely in assigned sectors. These problems were solved in the next few months:

During that period of time we organized and conducted mobilization training and command and staff education and training only. That specific training covered battalion and brigade commanders and staffs and all mobilization personnel responsible for platoon and squad organization. The ZOGZ organized the brigade commands' training and brigade commands later organized and conducted training for their subordinated commands and units. It is very important to realize that this training took place in a very difficult environment; at this time the former JNA was still in all its facilities in Zagreb. All the Sector staffs organized the same training until the end of summer of 1991. Recognizing that the shortage of weapons did not allow other forms of training, we organized only basic training of selected units with the weapons and equipment that we had. This training covered 82 mm and 120 mm mortar platoons, 76 mm and 82 mm gun platoons and a part of our air defense units; mostly 20 mm and 30 mm gun platoons. Artillery officers of ZOGZ and reserve officers from artillery units were the organizers of this training.

Faced with upcoming aggression, Zagreb City Government representatives started providing greater support. Urgent making of military uniforms (BDU), the preparations of City infrastructure and transport capacities was activated to overcome some of the weaknesses of the logistic support.

The ZOGZ also organized the collection of huge amounts of military equipment from members of former reserve TO units; military boots, helmets, protective masks, mess utensils, leather belts and other useful things were collected. At the same time old uniforms were rejected because of repulsion, not just because they were worn out. The soldiers wouldn't wear the uniform of the JNA.

Political, informational and psychological operations were managed by MOD and ZOGZ was only occasionally involved. For example, ZOGZ was the co-organizer of first Parade of National Guard Corp held on May 28, 1991 at the soccer stadium in Zagreb. We created and trained more than one third of the units present at this event.

After continuous aggression of JNA on the cities in Slavonia, Lika, Dalmatia and Banovina, the Croatian Government decided to conduct a full blockade of all military facilities of JNA in Zagreb and entire the Republic of Croatia. War started in Croatia.

AGGRESSION ON CROATIA AND DEFENSIVE PHASE OF THE CROATIAN HOMELAND WAR

On September 14, 1991 the war organization of ZOGZ started to function. The blockade of the military facilities of JNA meant new way of functioning for ZOGZ and its subordinate units. The ZOGZ Staff was expanded to 130 members (officers, NCOs and civilians) who had the task to organize and execute mobilization of units according to quantities of weapons that were recovered from JNA facilities. Actually, the JNA facilities, where the weapons bought by Croatian citizens were held, started to surrender from the beginning of blockade. Thus, units were mobilized according to amounts of weapons that were coming from JNA facilities.

As they were ready, the first mobilized units were sent to the southern front of Zagreb on the Kupa River under the command of the newly formed Zagreb Corps Command, now the higher command of

ZOGZ. All the other ZOGZ units were deployed throughout Croatia where they were needed. Zagreb was the strategic source of "human resources" and ZOGZ became the biggest force provider in the Croatian Armed Forces. ZOGZ brigades took their places throughout Croatia: in Slavonia, Posavina, Banovina, Kordun, Lika, Dalmatia and all the way to Dubrovnik. Although they consisted solely of reservists (including brigade commanders) these brigades were successfully used far from their home location. Most other Croatian reserve brigades fought only in their own home locations. This fact was one of the most important characteristics of ZOGZ brigades.

The first two mobilized brigades (99 brigade and 151 brigade) were sent to the front the same day that they were mobilized due to the critical situation in Western Slavonia and Posavina. The only training they had was mobilization training, the brief training for brigade and battalion commands, and the inspection of equipment conducted in August of 1991. That was a difficult decision but the situation was very complicated and we did not have enough time for long-term training of those brigades. We realized right away that we would have to do better at conducting the necessary mission training in an urgent or crisis situation. We immediately organized three Training Centers supported by Sector staffs "East", "West" and "South" and prepared and equipped each of them for a short 7 days training period. Those Training Centers were capable of receiving and training units up through battalion. We convinced our superior officers from the newly established General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces that mobilization of complete brigades in a single day led to collapse. Finally, we got permission for partial mobilization of battalions and ran each of them through a 7-day training period. The ZOGZ officers, Sector staff instructors and officers from non-mobilized units provided the training in these three training centers for brigades and battalions that were mobilized. Basic tactical training of individual soldiers, squads and platoons were the main focus of the training. Field manuals of former JNA and TO were used after modifications of the necessary language changes. Each battalion ended its training with live fire of infantry weapons on a shooting range taken from the former JNA. This shooting range was located close to Zagreb and was built with financial support of the Zagreb City Government for the World student games in 1987.

Training of support units was organized on separate small training facilities around Zagreb. Artillery, air defense, engineer and Special Forces training were conducted. Relatively quick improvement of readiness levels was possible because many of the soldiers were members of the same reserve units for 5-10 years prior to the conflict. Most of the soldiers knew each other and they had similar training as members of former TO reserve units. That made training easier. The main problem was with officer and NCO competency and that was main reason for organizing the commander and staff training as the most important type of training. Individual professional officer training was not a problem due to the excellent technical education of prospective officers. Most of them had great personal experience from their previous civilian jobs. Educated and experienced engineers, doctors, economists and many others did not have to be taught about their job requirements.

The fall season of 1991 was a period of great enthusiasm and everybody wanted to help in achieving the common goal: freedom of Croatia from Serbian aggressors led by the JNA. However, that was not easy to do. When we figured out that the ZOGZ could not expect help or support of the active officers of former JNA, Croats and our allies, we realized we would have to find other solutions. Zagreb was the cultural, economic, scientific, financial and intellectual center of the Republic of Croatia and there was great human potential. Citizens from many different occupations offered their help and the lack of regular military education and knowledge was more than compensated by their huge intellectual abilities. More than 15 PhD's, about 30 Master of Science graduates, many engineers, lawyers, University teachers and others became Croatian soldiers and later officers. Without their contribution the organizing the ZOGZ and its subordinate units would have been impossible.

Serbian military forces attacked on all the fields. Hard battles took place in Eastern and Western Slavonia. Vukovar, Osijek, Slavonski Brod, Vinkovci and other cities were exposed to daily artillery, armored and air force attacks. The same situation occurred in all regions of Croatia. At the end of October 1991, very close to Zagreb, only 20 miles from the center of the City (on the Kupa river) the Serbs pushed Croatian defense forces to the left bank of the river and burned several villages as well as the biggest Croatian mineral water factory in Jamnica. The General Staff of the Croatian Armed forces realized that Zagreb was directly threatened and decided to relieve the Zagreb Corps of its mission to defend the city and gave the mission and the Zagreb Corps' subordinate units to the ZOGZ.

We immediately formed a temporary Command led by Chief of Staff ZOGZ and gave them that mission. Immediately after we took command of a 45 miles long battlefield, we moved our temporary headquarters closer to the Kupa river; only 2 miles away from the river instead of the 10 miles away where it used to be. We increased our units' ability to fight and the enemy was pushed back to the right bank of Kupa river. Our defense system was stabilized and consolidated. This temporary Command remained active until the spring season of 1992 when it handed over responsibility to local territorial units, according to the Sarajevo peace agreement that was signed in January 1992. During that period of time (October of 1991 to April of 1992), the ZOGZ successfully performed two huge tasks: Direct operational command of an area of responsibility and force provider for all the important sectors in Croatia. We divided the ZOGZ into two parts and rotated our personnel between the two parts. The tasks performed in Zagreb were as important as the defense mission and we continued to provide critical mobilization and logistic support.

In only a few months we took over the entire supply and stores of weapons and equipment of former TO that were stored in JNA facilities. Technical maintenance was organized with the help of the Zagreb industry and war production of basic military articles was established. Through the University restaurants military units got over 15 million meals. Medication and other medical supplies were also provided. The ZOGZ created written orders and documents for all the tasks and activities assigned although our higher Corps command rarely sent us written orders. In ZOGZ orders the tasks for units were clearly and precisely given, including regulations about respecting the international conventions of

war, prisoners, responsibilities of military police etc. That was also one of the differences between the new Croatian Army and Serbian occupying forces that showed no respect for other people's rights. Officers of ZOGZ were never involved in politics during that period of time and they did not publicly state their opinions. Some of them were likely members of different political parties but never discussed their affiliations or preferences. Tolerance and respect among people were the main characteristics of human relations in the ZOGZ.

In addition to the challenges already described we had one additional functional problem. During the first phase of the Homeland war we did not have rank or duty insignia. In February of 1992 we had a meeting with the Commander in Chief and President of Republic of Croatia organized by the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces. Corps commanders, Division commanders and Brigade commanders were invited and informed the President of the problem. The decision was that according to the formation books it was necessary to develop proposals for appointment of officers and NCOs. Criteria for appointment included time spent in specific positions, education, unit size etc. Proposals were sent from Brigade commanders to Division commanders and then to Corp commanders and finally to the General Staff. The President of Republic appointed officers and the Defense Minister appointed NCOs, according to law. Brigade commanders, autonomous battalion commanders and higher level commanders got appointed or promoted on March 10, 1992 and all of the others on May 28, 1992 on the first anniversary of the Croatian Armed forces. On March 10, 1992 I was promoted to the rank of LTC. Rank and duty insignia were helpful and supported our efforts in establishing the better military organization needed during that period of time.

The patriotism, dedication and professional conduct of the members of ZOGZ must be most important reasons for explaining that after the disbanding of this Command not even one investigation took place. Although the ZOGZ was responsible for more than 47,000 soldiers, NCOs and officers of 11 infantry brigades (3 were never mobilized), and numerous other units, dishonorable events never took place. My subordinates and I have nothing to be concerned about because we gave our best effort and contribution to achieve the goal sought after many centuries – creation of the Republic of Croatia as the homeland of all of its citizens.

DEMOCRATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES

The Croatian Armed forces were created according to the desire of the Croatian people to finally create and establish their own country. The victory of democracy in the first elections held in 1990 offered the opportunity for the creation of the Croatian military. Due to a shortage of experienced personnel with military education, the Croatian Army developed directly from civil society. Numerous people with different education and professional backgrounds brought their knowledge and experience and contributed to the development of this young military organization.

In the Croatian capital Zagreb the ZOGZ was the best example of that manner of making the Croatian Army. Thousands of civilians with different professions became soldiers "over night". Many of them volunteered and a lot of others were mobilized. Even though we were faced with the so-called

professionals of the JNA, extremely well equipped with reportedly excellent military education, we successfully defended ourselves. Many reasons were important for our success.

The former JNA failed because of following: failure of democratic and civilian control of the military; transformation of the JNA to the Serb's occupation force; finally, the intention to occupy Croatian territory as part of the creation of Greater Serbia. Economic reasons, not concerns for the "threatened" Serb minority in Croatia, were the real reasons for aggression.

On the other side, Croatian Army was created as a result of the spontaneous resistance of the people against Serb aggression. Respecting for civilian authorities and following the decisions they made were the main characteristics of Croatian military. Newly developed Armed Forces, from the beginning of their development, were only a part of society, without any special status. In spite of insufficient weapons, fighting for the survival and the protection of our homes were strong motivations for us. Surrender was not considered and nobody did think about it. In time even the Serbs realized that.

The international community did not find out what was going on during that first period of aggression. There were a lot of reasons for that. European countries accepted the explanations of Yugoslav diplomats, mostly of Serbs, that it was all about internal political issues that would be solved quickly. After six months and 15,000 dead, Europe reacted and helped Croatia. The USA did not react because of problems in Iraq. Organizations of the United Nations were also slow to react, reflecting the peace of a large bureaucracy. Public opinion and the position of the international community changed after the Serb and Montenegrin attack on Dubrovnik, a city protected by UNESCO as a world famous cultural monument.

Although the basic organization structure of ZOGZ and subordinated units was not very different from the JNA organization, some differences existed. They reflected the need for the ZOGZ to be psychologically and culturally in tune with our Croatian soldiers and their mission. Reasons for that were different tasks that we were faced with. Civilian nature of the Croatian Army was probably the most important advantage of our new military. On the tactical level we quickly established the professional competence, because a lot of soldiers had some experience from reserve units of former JNA and TO. Officers and NCO's were what we lacked. Because of the criteria for selection of reserve and active officers of the former JNA we were short a few thousand officers. That shortage soon became our biggest advantage. Croatian intellectuals, engineers, professors, doctors, clerks, workers, students and others became Croatian officers. On the other side, former JNA officers were mostly rigid, without a sense of social issues and reality. There were some exceptions: younger officers, educated during late 1970's and 1980's. Some of them moved to our side or left the JNA. The tactical and operational knowledge they had was based on traditional "Russian military education" without creative and new solutions. Our tactics, on the contrary, usually constrained by small numbers of weapon and technical equipment, were a big surprise for JNA. Creativity was encouraged on all the levels and Serbs were surprised and even lost. Our Croatian soldiers were mostly members of the rock-generation of 1970's. Alcohol and folk music motivated the Serbian soldiers.

There were a lot of differences. The democratic character of Croatian Army was one of the important and maybe even the most important difference. The causes for the conflict were seen differently: a fight for survival from one side and aggression and the attempt to occupy on the other. Finally, the danger of war made soldiers out of civilians and that was decisive point. The winner was evident.

CONCLUSIONS

Changes in Europe during 1990's occurred in different ways. In former Yugoslavia communist leaders had no sense of how to shape peaceful solution for problems. The democratic decision of the people expressed in the first free elections was unacceptable for leaders of Serbian politics because it meant the end of their domination in Croatia.

The Croatian people, faced with Serbian aggression, decided to fight for survival. The Croatian Army was created directly from people consisted of volunteers from all the levels of Croatian society. The City of Zagreb, as the strategic source of human resources, organized 14 reserve brigades, of which 11 were mobilized, as well as many other military units. The ZOGZ, which was led by me from its beginning until its disbanding in March 1993, was probably the best example of the organization of a military unit directly from civilian society. Only one active officer from the former JNA was a member of ZOGZ. Only one (previously retired) JNA officer commanded one of the ZOGZ brigades. All of others were officers with a civilian background; some with experience from reserve JNA or former TO units. The shortage of typical military education that was given by JNA actually became an advantage. The huge influence of ideology on military education in former JNA made profession a secondary issue.

The shortage of technical support within the Croatian Army was compensated by the organization of domestic military production. The Croatian people manifested an extraordinary sense for organization even in war conditions. Despite the great burden of war expenses and the destruction of Croatian cities, the economy did not collapse.

The principal emotion that remains when I reflected on that period of time is pride. It is eight years since the disbanding of the ZOGZ and six years since the recovering of the occupied territory of Republic of Croatia. I feel that I participated in the most important part of Croatia's recent history and I gave my best. In the future we will see if our success endures.

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