

THE ROLE OF JNA AS SERBIAN IMPERIAL FORCE IN THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

SUMMARY

On a general level, the role of JNA in the Bosnian war is the same as the one in Croatia, and the plan to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of the same all-encompassing plan. This essay explains not only the basic idea formed on the basis of the war plan S-2 (a total "aggression" of NATO against former Yugoslavia), but also its modifications, as well as the restructuration (adaptation) of JNA with the objective of creating "new Serbian armies".

Within the topics mentioned, it is explained when and where JNA reached its "strategic apex" as Serbian military force. The emergence of that concept in recent analyses, especially in western countries, means that the war on the territory of former Yugoslavia is not investigated any more by analysing the importance of a particular operation and its consequences, the strength and capabilities of the armies, the number of casualties, the importance and value of destroyed infrastructure and objects, but on the level of strategic thinking, which tries to determine a "place" fore each country.

The war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be approached like a game of concepts created by using subtle logical methods. Instead, the approach must be deduced from the concept of the set objective of aggression, the means of aggression and their use. In such strategic general analyses, it is essential to start from the role of the military force (JNA) used as an instrument of aggression. Accordingly, this essay is meant to show the role of JNA in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

by Rear-Admiral Davor DOMAZET-LOŠO

("HRVATSKI VOJNIK" februar 1998.)

Introductory remarks

After the war in Croatia, in which JNA did not achieve its set objective, "to defeat the Croatian army and reach the border of Slovenia" in order to gain the "western Serbian border" Virovitica - Karlovac - Kariobag (following the ideas of their memorandum), the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes the object of strategic calculations. This territory is the basis for the realization of the ideal of "Greater Serbia". General Kadijević said that the Serbian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by its geographic location and number, represents one of the keystones of the creation of a state encompassing the whole of the Serbian people, either a new Yugoslavia, or an exclusively Serbian state. He stated literally: "Without Yugoslavia, there is no Bosnia and Herzegovina, which means that Yugoslavia must be upheld strongly and unconditionally, no matter whether one wants it or not."

This a priori claim leads to a reasonable question: what is the role of JNA in Bosnia and Herzegovina? While the analysis of the war in Croatia is an important part of Kadijević's book, the war in Bosnia is almost completely ignored, taking only two pages², without any analysis.

A. THEORETICAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL FOUNDATION OF THE AGGRESSION PLAN

The all-encompassing strategic plan

It can be easily understood that, on a general level, the role of JNA in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the same as its role in Croatia, because it is based on the common strategic idea of the creation of a "Greater Serbia". This general level implies a long and systematic transformation of JNA into the Serbian imperial force, following a structural, organizational, operative and practical plan based on a common idea. This reshaping should be coordinated in accordance with the interior and international circumstances, while the motto would always be the same: "protect the Serbian population and help it to defend itself", for the stated purpose of "preventing conflicts among peoples".³

The operative plan for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was also created on the basis of a total (radical) western "aggression" against Yugoslavia (the war plan S-2), and it included the same structural elements: theoretical, organizational and experimental.⁴

¹ Veljko Kadijević, "My vision of the break-up", Belgrade, 1993, p.146. ² Veljko Kadijević, id., pp.145-147.

³ Davor Domazet-Lošo, "How the aggression against Croatia was prepared, or the transformation of JNA into the Serbian imperial force", Hrvatski vojnik (Croatian soldier), n.26, August 1997. ⁴ Id., pp.11-13.

The theoretical and organizational elements are unified, as in the war in Croatia, while the experimental elements continue and expand, including the territory of south-western, southern and central Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A summarized plan of the actions of the "blue" - NATO-aggressor - on the territory of BH

The plan of the actions of NATO during a total aggression against Yugoslavia on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the following:

The operative forces of NATO, united in the OG (Operative Group) "JADRAN", after the sea-and-air deployment of forces on the outer islands in the Adriatic sea ("D-D+2"), deploy on "D+6" in Ravni Kotari, that is, Slano. Then, TG "ANCONA" and 10th AC (Army Corps) are introduced in those deployment bases on "D+15", and they continue the action deep into the territory of BH. (Picture 1)

The forces of the 10th AC go through the valley of Neretva toward Sarajevo, in order to unite with the 101st Airborne Division (AF USA), which deploys on "D+17" in Ravna Romanija (west of Pale), and the forces of TG "ANCONA" go round Knin and towards Sinj, Livno, Kupres and Bugojno, advancing toward Sarajevo from the west

and helping the forces of the 10th AC on the left wing. In order to increase the speed of the attacks, tactical airborne assaults are being made at the mountain crossing of Vaganj (Kamešnica) and the town of Aršano.

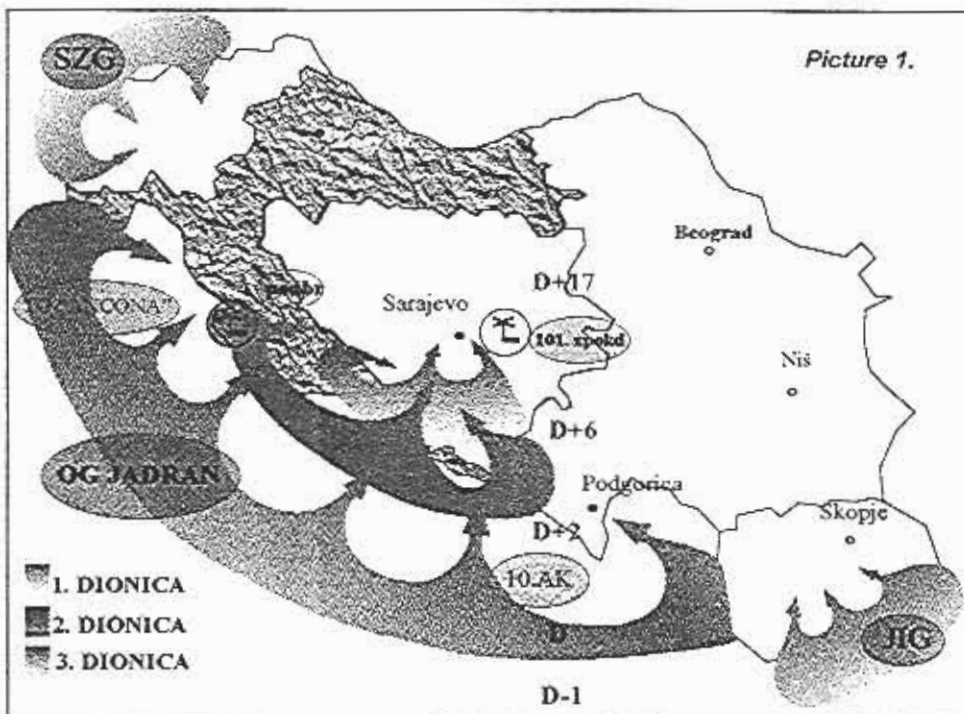
The actions of the "red" (JNA)

Following this plan of the "aggressor", there is "only one" way of making an operative disposition of the "red" (JNA) forces - by forming three groups (Picture 2) with the following roles:

1) first group⁵ (OG "Mostar"), in the area of Mostar and eastern Herzegovina, must prevent the progress of the enemy through the valley of Neretva and stop the "blues" south of Mostar at worst, and then start a counter-attack, reach the shore and organize the defence there;

2) second group (OG "Kupres"), in the area of Kupres plateau and western Bosnia, must launch a lateral attack against the forces of TG "ANCONA" in the direction of Livno Valley and Sinj Valley, continuing its actions in the direction of Split and helping the forces making the counter-attack in the valley of Neretva;

3) third group (OG "Sarajevo"), in the half-circle of central and eastern Bosnia, must launch a directive encircling attack against the airborne forces deployed in Romanija and the forces trying to "deblock" Sarajevo, which is to be defended by all-round defence.



As in the aggression against Croatia, the operative disposition of the "red" forces was systematically controlled by means of a yearly training plan called "Military exercise of the General Staff - Romanija" (further on: MEGS "Romanija").

The attack directions of the "aggressor" and the operative disposition of the "red" defender clearly show that the General Staff of JNA chose: 1) south-western part of BH - that is, Herzegovina, and 2) Sarajevo - the capital of BH, as the key points of pacification (read: occupation) of BH on the strategical level.

The defence of the south-western part of BH was crucial. Freedom, not only of BH, but also of the whole of southern Croatia, depended on it.

5. The term "group" is used in order to clearly show its real purpose. Serbian military planners did a very good job in masking the manner in which they intended to execute the pacification of the territory of future "Greater Serbia". They used the so-called "manoeuvre of the artichoke". The "breaking up" of JNA was prepared in advance and, which is even more important, closely surveilled, and it was executed in such a way to leave to each new-formed Serbian "state" enough weaponry, military technology, ammunition, fuel and experts, so that they can strengthen their "borders". This leaf-by-leaf peeling of the artichoke can be done if the defence against the aggression of NATO is moved westwards as far as possible, which was the basic point of the war plan S-1.

Using strategy in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina

Since the efforts of JNA to conquer BH quietly (by threats and selective use of military force) did not work out, especially among the Croat population (which established its own military organization), JNA decided to execute the pacification of BH after the Croatian model, because the Bosnian-Muslim part of the government of BH showed weaknesses, which strengthened the belief of JNA that the war would end soon.

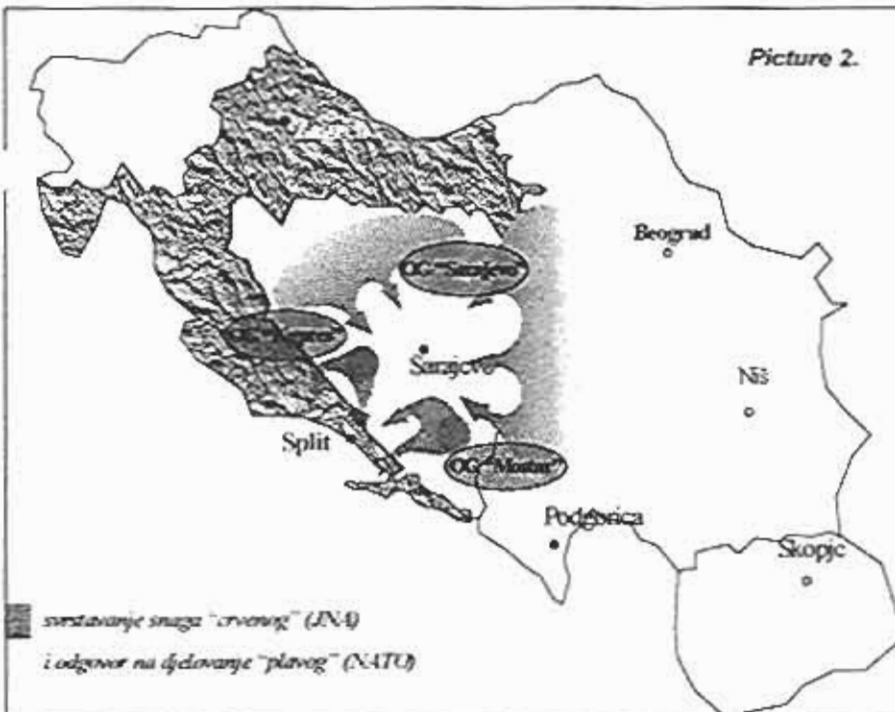
At this point, it is important to understand that the general plan for creating a "Greater Serbia" and reaching the "western Serbian border" stays the same, and it is only being adjusted to the political and military situation. The adjustment consists in keeping the control over the occupied regions of

Reaching the strategic apex

After the first phase of the war in Croatia, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina broke out.

The war in Croatia, actually its first phase, was subject to various intentional "doubts" and even unsubstantiated statements: who won, who lost, whether the cease-fire agreement had to be signed, thereby preparing the arrival of international forces (UNPROFOR), whether the conflict was international, and if it was, of what kind.

In recent times, which is very interesting, there has emerged a theory trying to "prove" that Serbia reached its "strategic apex" by the end of 1991, when it occupied Vukovar. That theory leads to the "proof" that the war in BH could have been avoided, and that the operations "Bijesak" ("Flash") and "Oluja" ("Storm") would not have been necessary.⁸



Croatia with the "help" of international forces while Bosnia and Herzegovina is being occupied; when it is done, almost a third of Croatian territory is to be annexed to the occupied BH. That would achieve the goal of "Greater Serbia", which would not have its western border along the line Karlobag - Karlovac - Virovitica, but it would not be far from it, since the border would go along: Starigrad Paklenica - Karlovac - Pakrac - Nova Gradiška - the river Sava - Vinkovci - Osijek.

⁶ The first phase of the war in Croatia formally ended on 1 January 1992. JNA and Serbian paramilitary forces had occupied more than a fourth of Croatian territory. After it left the occupied regions of Croatia, JNA left a larger part of its weaponry to the forces of occupation so that they could equip "the Serbian army of Krajina", and the rest was moved to BH.

⁷ "Strategic apex" is the value of maximum military power of a side in conflict during a specific time period and on a specific line (territory). After reaching the apex, the military power of the attacking force weakens, but never reaches a value close to zero.

⁸ That theory was forwarded in the essay "Ending the War and the Croatian war for independence: Decision about the time to stop", Norman Cigas, RRASINS, April 1997, pp. 37-54.

⁹ Here is what Clausewitz said about that: "Since the objective of attack is to conquer the enemy's territory, it means that the progress must go on until the superiority disappears. It leads

How can we give an answer to that theory on the level of strategic analysis? We can say that, undoubtedly, each war has a "strategic apex", but there can be a doubt concerning the time when it is reached. Strategy shows that, during the war, the aggressor had difficulties in determining his "strategic apex", which would indicate when he should stop. The defender had an even harder task, because he needed time to reorganize, train and equip the armed forces, so that he could make the transfer from "strategic defence" toward "strategic attack". This applies primarily to the armed forces in the process of formation, which was the case with the Croatian forces. Croatia had to fight for that precious time, because the enemy would never have given it freely.

Attack power, that is, the projection of military force, is not

only a number of people armed with their patriotism and morale, which Croatia certainly had at the time, but a combination of equipment, knowledge, operative movability and development, ability of control over the operations, answers to sudden and unexpected moves of the enemy. In a word, it is the credibility of the armed forces. In the attack operations and the operations of the lowest tactical level, not to mention the strategic levels, there is always the question of "price to be paid" in terms of manpower. The worse strategy is the one that sacrifices human lives, especially in a small state like Croatia (4,700,000 inhabitants).

to the objective, and can easily go even further. If we know how many elements make up the equation of forces, we can understand how difficult it is to determine who has the superiority in specific cases. It often depends on the silk thread of fantasy. Everything depends on a nuanced inspiration during the evaluation of the apex. Since the objective of JNA and Serbia was the occupation of BH, they "had and planned" the necessary forces in their war plans, as they did in Croatia. The Serbian superiority could disappear only in BH, and in a specific phase of the war. (Commentary of the author.)

After it won the first phase of the war, Croatia needed a period of rest for two reasons. First, to avoid further devastation, reorganize the army and supplant quantity by quality, increase the movability of forces, develop the ability of transferring the HQ as *conditio sine qua non* for the success of attack operations. Second, it was unwise and impossible to wage war on two separate battlefields while the main operative traffic lines were endangered (Zagreb - Karlovac - Rijeka; Zagreb - Karlovac - Zadar - Split - Dubrovnik; Zagreb - Nova Gradiška - Vinkovci - Osijek).

The important fact is that the beginning of the war in BH was determined exclusively by the Serbian political and military leadership, following a detailed plan. After the achievement of a reduced strategic goal (occupying almost a third of Croatia, but not reaching the "western Serbian border"), JNA and Serbia realized that a further waste of forces would be unwise, because the operation lost its impetus, and the conflict acquired an

international dimension - JNA and Serbia were clearly marked as aggressors. Therefore, the matter is not about reaching a "strategic apex", but about redirecting the military forces and deploying them to those areas that would lead to the best results in given circumstances. At that point, JNA and Serbia considered this: if they managed to solve the problem of BH as soon as possible, they would turn to Croatia again, and this time they would be in a far better position.

The question remains open: when and where could JNA and Serbia reach their strategic apex? The geostrategic position of Croatia, as well as the goal of "Greater Serbia", show that the apex could

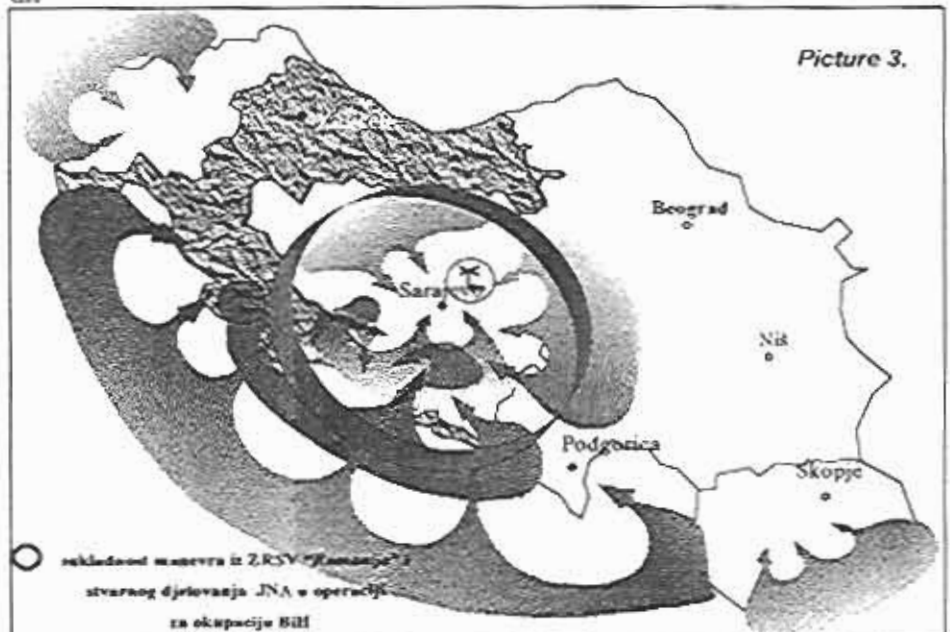
only be reached in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in its western part. Strategic apex is not determined by only one or two factors of military strategy, but all of them combined. Space is the most important factor, because war is conducted to control a space. Accordingly, the strategic apex must be located in space, as well as in time and strength of forces.

The best proof of that claim is the organization and operative development of the forces of JNA and Serbian rebels in BH, which was conducted during the first phase of the war in Croatia and was finished in the beginning of 1992 (January - April).

B. OPERATIVENESS AND ADAPTATION OF THE PLAN DURING THE AGGRESSION

Organization and operative development of the forces of JNA in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period of January - April 1992

To understand the strategic relationships on the territory of former Yugoslavia in 1992, we must return to the mentioned strategy of MEGS "Romanija". Three operative groups of JNA "defend" the territory of BH from the forces of NATO by conducting a "circular defence of Sarajevo" and a counter-attack in the direction of Mostar and the valley of Neretva, and further on, toward Livno and Split. This plan of defence and counter-attack shows clearly: first, a total congruence between the manoeuvres of JNA in



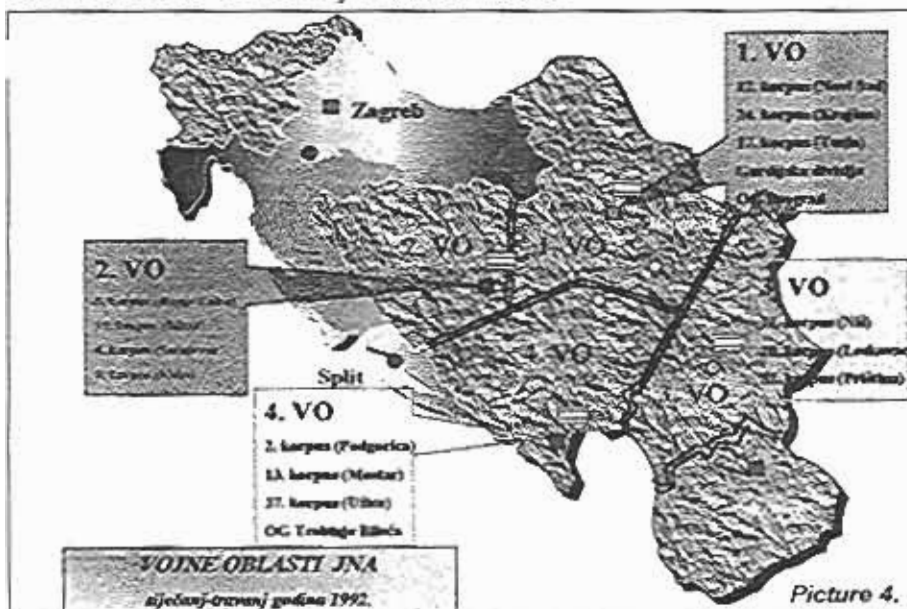
Picture 3.

MEGS "Romanija" and the operations of JNA with the aim of occupying BH in 1992 (Picture 3); second, that the defence of the directions Kupres - Livno - Split and Mostar - Ploče is the defence of BH, but also the defence of the whole of southern Croatia

Croatia was placed before two strategic possibilities: first, to start the attack operations to liberate the occupied regions with an army that is insufficiently prepared for such combat actions, which would mean paying a high price and not achieving the goal, in other words, a strategic defeat; second, to buy some time, reorganize the army and, at the same time, to prevent the realization of the adapted Serbian goal, and to keep the operative depth, not only in western BH but also in southern Croatia.

Croatia chose the second possibility and, as it was proven later, made the right choice. Why? There is an important strategic principle - the principle of contrast, which says that the interests of one side are the reverse of the other's interests. Warfare has two forms, attack and defence, which are very different and unbalanced. If one side wants to reach a solution later, the other side must seek a quick solution. If one side finds itself in a favorable situation, but it is too weak or unprepared for attack, it will not renounce its necessary defence, and therefore it is "forced to wait for a more suitable time, when it obtains a convincing and measurable military power"¹¹ Clausewitz said that the superiority of defence is very large, larger than one can imagine at first. From that standpoint, we can easily explain the big number of standstill periods that occur in a war¹² The question here is how to use the standstill and waiting better than the enemy, in order to defeat him.

There is another reason for a standstill during the war: the erroneous understanding of the situation caused by overestimation



Now that we explained the strategic alternatives, it would be useful to analyse how JNA and Serbian political leaders prepared themselves for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Preparations for the war

During the preparations for the war in BH, Kadijević noted that the cooperation between JNA and the representatives of the Serbs in BH, as well as the whole Serbian people, shows the way towards a new Yugoslavia. During the war in Croatia, this was ensured by a timely manoeuvre and movement of JNA forces across BH, which was very important to JNA. It was stressed that the manoeuvres and movements were subject to difficulties, sometimes even obstacles, but they were not actually stopped anywhere. Because of that, the mobilization in the "Serbian part" of BH gave very good results, and the problem of mobilization in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia was reduced.

This confirms that JNA, or Serbian forces in general, were not weakened or past their strategic apex, and that the second strategic disposition of complete Serbian military forces had another purpose.

Their intentions were the following: the organized, equipped and armed Serbs in the occupied regions of Croatia would conduct the defence as the forward strategic force, and the more powerful part of strategic disposition would be used to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby indirectly achieving the strategic objective of "Greater Serbia". Therefore, JNA had to direct one part of the second strategic disposition towards Croatia. Kadijević noted that they planned, after leaving Croatia and

or underestimation of the enemy forces or one's own forces. Embarking on a period of strategic evaluations means that one really holds to the principle which states that, the slower the war and the more frequent the standstills, the greater the possibility of making up for a mistake. Strategy always punishes mistakes. The biggest mistake in war is to attack at a wrong time. If a strategic attack operation for the liberation of occupied regions of Croatia had been started in the end of 1991 or in the beginning of 1992, it would have been an untimely attack, because it would not have satisfied the strategic principle of contrast and waiting, which requires the formation of forces that would transfer from strategic defence into strategic attack.

¹¹ This strategic principle is often forgotten or ignored, and people jump to the conclusion that Croatia could have conducted the strategic operation of attack as early as 1991 or 1992.

¹² "In many wars, warfare in its strict sense takes up only a smaller part of time, and standstill takes up everything else", Karl von Clausewitz, "On War", p.19, MURH, Zagreb, 1997.

creating one of the Serbian armies ("srpska vojska krajine" (Serbian Army of Krajina) - SVK)¹³ to install strong forces of JNA on the occupied territory of BH. Serbian military leadership believed that this disposition suited any real political direction that the events would take in BH, and it also answered the need for ready "strong forces" at the border with the so-called RSK (Serbian Republic of Krajina) to make sure that Croatia obeyed the Vance plan. What is more, Kadijević states that the decision to leave a part of the second strategic disposition in the occupied regions of Croatia was a correct decision: "the constant aggression of Croatia against RSK shows how right we were".

¹³ The process of creation of SVK, as we already noted, started on 3 January, when the Vance plan was applied, and JNA withdrew its troops from the occupied regions of Croatia by April 1992. The decision about the formation of a corps of SVK was brought in December 1992. The withdrawal of JNA was only formal, because the system of command, logistics, direction of personnel and financing remained under the authority of the General Staff in Belgrade.

In the operative sense, that move left Croatia in a much better situation, because the forces of JNA intended for the aggression against Croatia remained, yet not positioned in the depth of its national territory but outside of it. That way, the deployment of those military forces against Croatia was considerably weakened, and at the same time, they could not be used on the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In strategy, this is known as the double binding of forces.

Operative disposition and manoeuvre of the forces of JNA for the war in BH

At the time when the Vance plan was accepted, the aggression against Croatia was conducted with the forces that equalled "49 brigades" and comprised (including the inner (blocked) units of the 32nd, the 13th and the 10th corps¹⁴): 3 armour brigades, 6 mechanized brigades, 14 motorized (infantry) brigades,

18 brigades of TD (partisans), 12 units of TD, various units of artillery and rocketry support, air defence, engineers, and other specialized units.

All in all, their forces numbered: 90-95 thousands of soldiers, 850-900 tanks, 700-750 armored transporters, 1200 artillery pieces of all calibres, including R65 "Luna" earth-to-earth rockets, rocket systems of air defence, and 24 battleships (Vis and Lastovo). Some 350 aircrafts were engaged in the combats.

The control and command system of JNA was adjusting from Slovenia and Croatia to BH. In the conditions when the command of the 5th Army District (AD) in Zagreb and the Navy District in Split could not

exercise command, it was done by the General Staff (GS) of Armed Forces of SFRJ. The GS had direct command over parts of the 1st AD (the corps of Novi Sad, Tuzla and Banja Luka), and especially over the temporarily formed units of OG I and 2, which were used in the aggression against Croatia.

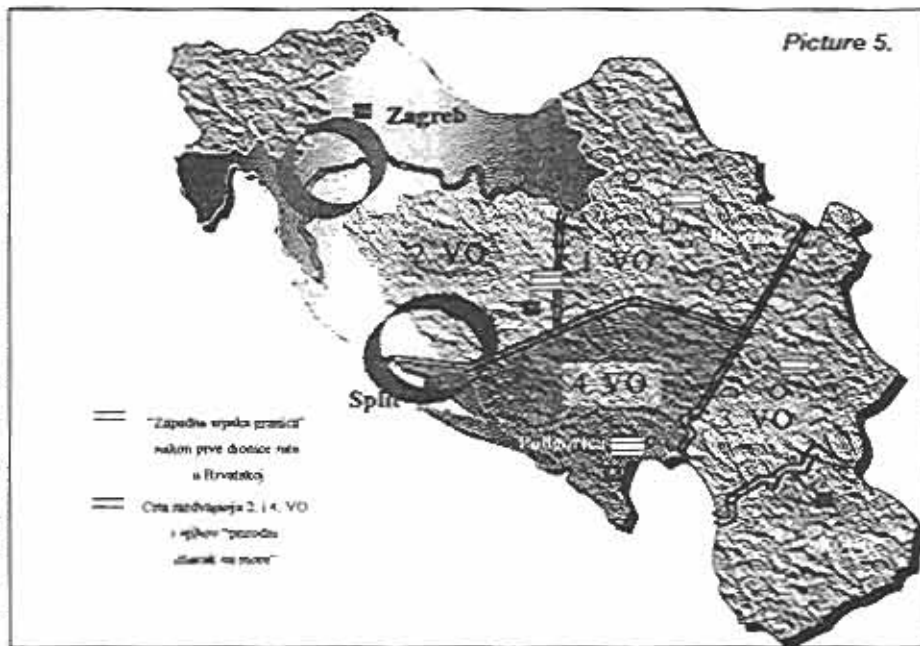
That situation lasted until December 1991, when JNA reorganized its system of command. The main reorganization of JNA was conducted starting from 30th December, because it was then that the

¹⁴ By mid-July 1991, JNA agreed that it would withdraw its troops (the 14th and the 31st corps) from Slovenia during the next three months. The withdrawal was planned by the end of October 1991. The forces of both corps were initially placed in western Serbia. Later, a bigger part of the 11st Maribor corps and a smaller part of the 14th Ljubljana corps were included into the 17th corps, which had a large number of casualties during the combats in western Slavonia, and the bigger part of the 14th corps was included into the 2nd Podgorica corps. In December, the 13th corps (Rijeka) was transported by ships to the harbour of Bar in Montenegro. The bigger part of that corps was deployed in eastern Herzegovina at the beginning of 1992, and its forces were used to form OG "Trebinje - Bileća". The troops of the 10th corps from Zagreb were initially moved to Slunj, and later to Bihać, and they were the core of the newly formed Bihać corps, which was later renamed into the 2nd Aradina corps.

Serbian President of the Union issued his assent to the disbanding of the 5th AD with the command in Zagreb and the command of Navy District in Split. However, we must consider the wider context of that situation, when JNA was "forced" to prepare itself for the "battle for the life of Yugoslavia", that is, the occupation of BH, in unpropitious conditions. Beside that, there was also the recognition of the sovereign state of Croatia by the international community and the ever louder international protests against the aggression made by JNA and Serbia.

Disposition and organization of the new army districts

The main objective of the reorganization of JNA was to obtain the superior position in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Undoubtedly, JNA considered Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of Serbia and Montenegro.



The eastern part of BH, to the east of river Bosna, was added to the 1st AD, the southern part was assigned to the newly-formed 4th AD, and the rest, mainly the western and central regions of BH, came under the authority of the 2nd AD.

For the war in BH, JNA formed the 2nd AD and the 4th AD with the command in Sarajevo and Podgorica (December 91 - January 92). In March 92, during the withdrawal of JNA from Macedonia, the command of the 3rd AD was moved from Skopje to Niš.

A smaller part of the 10th corps was included into the 17th corps (Tuzla) during November and December 1991. The last unit of JNA that left Croatia was the 3rd corps (Knin), which moved to western Bosnia: Bosansko Grahovo - Glamoč - Kupres.

Beside the existing and reduced 1st AD, the land forces of JNA were organized into four army districts, as groups on the strategic level, and their commands were responsible for preparing, organizing and coordinating the battle use of JNA in parts of the territory of former Yugoslavia.

The division (see Picture 4) included: the 1st AD (Belgrade) - Voivodina and northern Serbia to the orientation line Kragujevac - Užice, including Kragujevac and excluding Užice and north-eastern BH¹⁵; the 3rd AD (Niš) - southern Serbia and Kosovo; the 2nd AD (Sarajevo) - western, northern and central BH to the line Foča - Kalinovik - Mostar; the 4th AD (Podgorica) - southern BH to the line Foča - Kalinovik - Mostar, Montenegro, south-western Serbia¹⁶.

battalion), a communications regiment, a nucleo-biologico-chemical defence regiment. The 1st AD and the 3rd AD had also an independent armoured or mechanized brigade.

The total strength of the forces of JNA positioned in BH at the beginning of 1992 (the 2nd AD, parts of the 4th AD and the 1st AD) was the following: 83,000 soldiers, 460-500 tanks, 400-420 armoured vehicles and 950-1000 pieces of artillery.

The commanding structure of the reorganized JNA had 92,6% of Serbs, 7% of Montenegrins, and 0,4% of others.

The system of control over the forces (Scheme 1) was such that the Serbian "ministry of defence of autonomous regions" in Croatia and BH was directly subordinated to the ministry of defence of SRJ, which

"coordinates the creation of defence plans" and whose collective goal is "to protect outer borders and integrate them into the system of Yugoslavia".

The GS of JNA had the operative command over all the units of "VJ" ("Army of Yugoslavia"), "VRS" ("Army of Serbian Republic") and "SVK" ("Serbian Army of Krajina").

The possibilities of individual corps and their units were smaller than the optimal. It was shown in the war in Croatia, and even more in the first phase of the war in BH. There were many signs showing that, mainly because of the problems with the reserve (problems with both the number and training of troops), JNA had many problems in providing the

SUSTAV ZAPOVJEDANJA SNAGAMA "JNA" U BIH U PRVOJ DIONICI RATA (OŽUJAK-TRAVANJ 1992)



The army districts kept their old structures, which were based on the corps of various strengths and compositions, as groups on the operative level, disposed at the directions of their planned use. Besides, there were some special elements under the command of the AD: a couple of mixed artillery brigades, a mixed anti-armour brigade, a digging (engineering) brigade, a backup motorized regiment (for the protection of the commands of AD; it consisted of a battalion of military police, a diversion unit and a motorized

whole functional structure of the brigades. As the war went on, the problem became more serious, and JNA was more and more often forced to combine professional parts of various formations, and use them according to the principles of tactical groups of various strengths and purposes.¹⁹

15 The 1st army district included four corps: the 1st corps (Belgrade), the 12th corps (Novi Sad), the 17th corps (Tuzla), the 24th corps (Kragujevac), a guard division and the defence of Belgrade, all in all 75,000 soldiers.

16 After the withdrawal from Macedonia, the 3rd AD received under its authority the 41st corps, which was placed in Zaječar, Knjaževac and Paraćin, and the 42nd corps, of which a larger part was placed in Leskovac, and a smaller part in Vrbjevo; these corps were combined into the new 70th corps (Leskovac). The command of the 3rd AD was moved from Skopje to Niš, and gained authority over the 21st corps (Niš) and the 32nd corps (Priština).

17 The 2nd army district included: the 5th corps (Banja Luka), the 10th corps (Bihać), the 4th corps (Sarajevo), and the 9th corps (Knin) or (Grahovo-Glamoč-Kupres).

18 The 4th army district included: the 2nd corps (Podgorica), the 37th corps (Užice), the 13th corps (Mostar), and DG "Trebinja-Bileća" (Bileća).

19 It must have been a big challenge for intelligence services, because it was necessary to know the actual composition of a particular unit in order to make a realistic evaluation of its real combat capabilities. In other words, considering only the determined composition for a particular class and level of unit would have led to wrong conclusions or decisions. (Remark of the author.)

Purpose of military territorial division

Military territorial division and organization of forces shows that the 2nd AD and the 4th AD, as the first strategic force in the occupation of BH, was meant to conduct the pacification of territory following the model of Croatia. They were to connect the Serbian enclaves, get rid of the Croats and Muslims in the area, deploy the military force to southern Croatia, and help the Serbian forces in the occupied regions of Croatia. The other strategic force, the 1st AD and the 3rd AD, had the role of the strategic reserve. It was to use a part of its forces to strengthen the

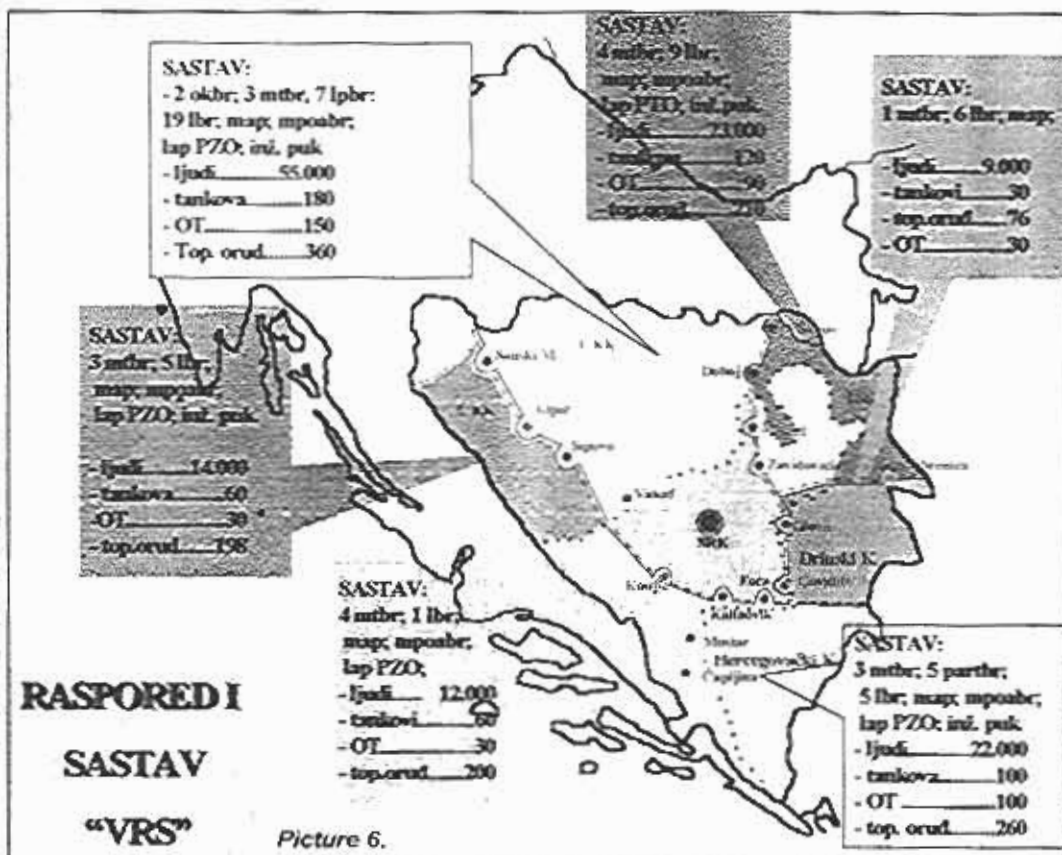
2nd AD and the 4th AD, and lead the offensive in eastern BH.

It can be seen that, by the introduction of eastern BH under the authority of the 1st AD, Serbia extended its territory over the west bank of Drina, and it increased its small operative depth by the authority of the 4th AD over its south-western part.

The demarcation line of the ADs shows that Belgrade wanted not only to solve the problem of BH, but also to indirectly ensure the appropriation of the occupied regions of Croatia, because the 2nd AD and the 4th AD have a "natural" geostrategic exit to the sea, and the demarcation line is Vrljika - cape Dalmatinska Ploča. (Picture 5)

Part of forces continues its actions and goes to the right bank of Neretva, passes through Stolovi, conquers the left bank of Neretva, arrives to the Adriatic sea in the area of Neum - Ploče, and merges with the occupational forces in the area of Bistrina - Dola. If this operative plan works out, Bosnia is closed in the "claws". The second phase of the operation is easier. It concentrates on Sarajevo and possible small areas of resistance within BH which would be quickly eliminated.

The first phase of operation was not realized because both breakthroughs were stopped by the defenders on 23 April 1992, one in the valley of Livno, on the line



Realization of the first phase of the operative plan

With the operatively developed forces of the first strategic force (the 2nd AD, the 4th AD) and a part of the forces of the second strategic force (the 1st AD, the 3rd AD), JNA began the realization of the operative plan for the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1992. It had already occupied a part of eastern Herzegovina (Ravno, Popovo polje).²⁰

The first phase of the operation was the following: by a coordinated attack and manoeuvre in the form of "crab's claws", in the open directions of Grahovo - Glamoč - Kupres and Trebinje - Bileća - Mostar, break the enemy defence, pass through Livno and Arzano, come to central Dalmatia and exercise pressure on Split.

Rujani - Celebić - Korićina, and the other in Stolovi, in the valley of Neretva. The "claws" remained open, and, as a consequence, the operative basis of southern Croatia and western BH was defended. This "spatial basis" has a strategic quality, which was demonstrated by further developments of war and especially by the final operations intended to liberate the occupied regions of Croatia and the attack operations in western and central BH in the autumn of 1995. The whole of the strategic approach shows that this region had the "best and strongest deployment of forces" in this war. It was also the place where JNA and Serbia reached their "strategic apex" in "early spring of 1992". It was the highest point of the parabolic curve whose downward slope, and the Serbian military might, would lead more and more to the east.

²⁰ The forces of JNA occupied and destroyed the town of Ravno during their raid against Dubrovnik on 28 September 1991. Since it was clearly an act of aggression, that date marks the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The new transformation and the second phase of the operation

After the failure to close the "claws" in western BH and completely occupy Sarajevo, the plan underwent further adaptations, and JNA was transformed again.²¹ The command over JNA and Serbian forces in BH was given to General Ratko Mladić on 10 May.²² His commanding responsibilities comprise the whole 2nd AD and a smaller part of the 1st AD and the 4th AD, whose organization would follow the directions of the formation of "VRS". Forces of the 1st, 3rd and 4th AD which were located in Serbia and Montenegro would enter into the troops of the "Army of Yugoslavia" as the armed forces of the "new state".²³

After he became the commander of "VRS",

In the first half of 1992, there were six corps located on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the total number of 135,000 soldiers, 550 tanks, more than 1300 pieces of artillery and 430 armoured vehicles. They controlled a large quantity of strategic reserve of weapons, ammunition, and other equipment important for the independent fighting during a long time period. At the same time, the first strategic force of "Army of Yugoslavia" was operatively developed and positioned on the left and right banks of Drina.

After the transformation of JNA into two new Serbian armies, a new offensive was launched, with the goal of conquering as much of BH-territory as possible. The plan was to connect western and eastern Bosnia across Posavina (the Bosnian region around the river

Sava), to occupy Sarajevo and the valley of Neretva.

These forces were assigned for the conquest of Posavina, the crucial point in the second phase of the strategic operation: the whole 1st Krajina corps and East-Bosnia corps, a smaller part of the 2nd Krajina corps, and the backup forces: special units of Serbian police and militia of "SAO Krajina", mechanized brigade from Valjevo (2500 soldiers and 50 tanks), and the units of volunteers from Serbia. Air support was provided from the airports of Batajnica (Belgrade) and Banja Luka.

During the operation that started on 15 June 1992, Serbian forces, drawing some conclusions from the war in Croatia

and the first phase of the war in BH, used their advantages in equipment and support of all kinds (artillery, rocketry, aviation). With an adapted structure (battle groups and operative groups) and a realistic plan, they managed to take control over Posavina, with the exclusion of the wider area around Orašje.

members: commander - Second Lieutenant General Ratko Mladić, head of staff - Major General Manojlo Milovanović, aid for morale and informing - Major General Milan Opreo, aid for the reserve - Major General Borke Đukić, head of security - Colonel Srdavko Tolimit, head of mobilization office - Colonel Miro Gruber.

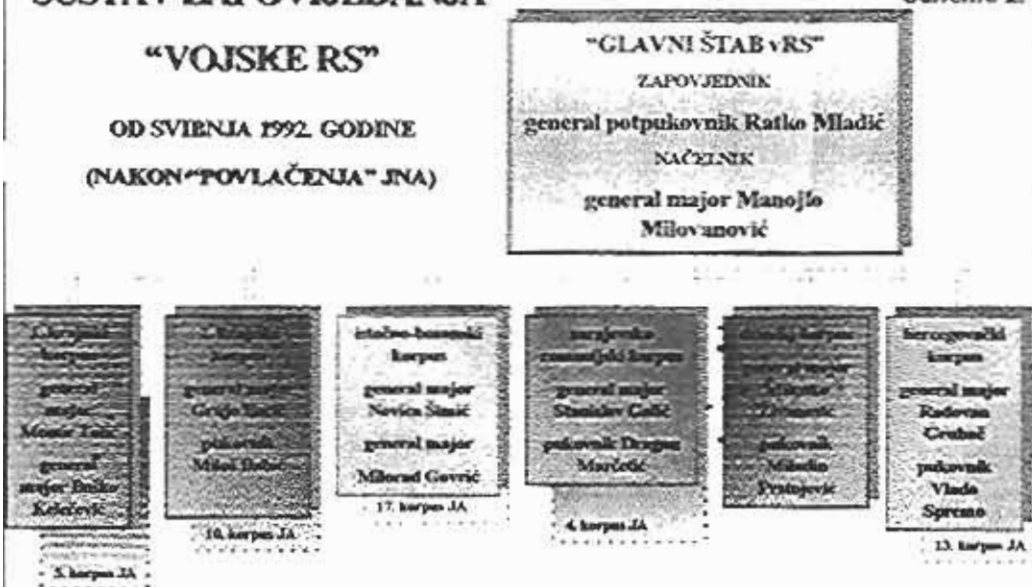
²³ "Army of Yugoslavia" was formed on 16 June 1992. The creation of the "third Serbian army" on the territory of former Yugoslavia was meant as a message that JNA was not the force of Serbian imperialism, but a "consequence" of the developments in the defence of the Serbian people. "Army districts" were abolished, and they were supplanted by the Army as the largest strategic force. "Army of Yugoslavia" consists of the 1st Army, the 2nd Army and the 3rd Army, which consist of corps and brigades.

SUSTAV ZAPOVIJEDANJA

"VOJSKE RS"

OD SVIENJA 1992. GODINE
(NAKON "POVLACENJA" JNA)

Scheme 2.



* Povlačenje JNA iz BiH je bilo samo deklarativno. Sustav zapovijedanja, postavljanja na dužnost, promicanja, plaće te planiranje snaga, ostalo je isključivo u nadležnosti Generalštaba Vojske Jugoslavije

General Mladić immediately reorganized his forces, and transformed the 5th corps into the 1st Krajina corps, the 9th and 10th corps into the 2nd Krajina corps, the 17th corps into the East-Bosnia corps, the 4th corps into the Sarajevo-Romanija corps and the 13th corps into the Herzegovina corps. Starting from 19 May 1992, the "General Staff" functions as the highest command of "VRS", and the transformation of other units and institutions follows. The operative disposition of the corps - see Picture 6. The system of command - see Scheme 2.

²¹ In the operation of closing the "claws", and the blockade of Sarajevo and the attempt to conquer the city, the corps of JNA were commanded by: the 10th corps (Herzegovina) - Major General Manjilo Perišić, the 9th corps (Napred, Glamoč, Gračac) - Major General Savo Kovačević, the 10th corps (western Bosnia) - Major General Spiro Ninković, the 17th corps (eastern Bosnia) - Second Lieutenant General Savo Janković, the 5th corps (Banja Luka) - Major General Vladimir Vuković, the 4th corps (around Sarajevo and partly in the city itself) - Major General Vojislav Bordevac.

²² The command about the forming of the "VRS" (Army of Serbian Republic) was signed by Lieutenant General Blagoje Adžić on 10 May 1992, when Lieutenant General Milutin Rukanjac was being held in JNA building in Sarajevo. The command states: "We are forming the General Staff of VRS consisting of the following

The success of the aggressor was probably aided by the weaknesses of the defenders of Posavina, which were most apparent in the organization of the defence, coordination of actions, professional knowledge and equipment of troops and staff, and also in the planning and execution of battle actions.

From the standpoint of operative capabilities, the cause of the occupation of Posavina can be found in the fact that the force of defenders was much smaller than that of the aggressor. The defenders lacked equipment and, even more important, an operative basis for the deployment of military force, and they certainly did not lack the wish to defend that historical land of the Croats. It is important to note that the Serbs projected their military force from one place (centre) by using "directed dispersing" or "concentrating", and they did not have to cross large obstacles, while the defenders had to use a directed manoeuvre across a large obstacle (river Sava) and a protracted canalized traffic line through the valleys of Neretva and Bosna. That is the main cause of the occupation of Posavina.

The siege of Sarajevo shows not only a total decadence of the art of warfare (medieval siege), but also a rigid terrorist use of military might before the eyes of the world.

The breakthrough in the valley of Neretva turned out as another failure for the Serbian forces. The counter-attack of the defenders resulted in the liberation of the whole left bank of Neretva in its middle and lower part.

Further developments of the war in BH were strongly influenced by international factors, and each of them showed or hid his own national interests. Nevertheless, only the final operations of Croatian armed forces lead to the solution of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By systematically forming an armed force in real international and internal conditions, Croatia was ready to face the challenges of mid-nineties and successfully answered them, while at the same time it gave a direct contribution to the coming of peace (Dayton) and established the strategic balance in these parts.

Conclusive remarks

Serbian analyses of the attempts to create a "Greater Serbia" in BH claim that JNA gave an essential contribution to the forming of the army of Bosnian Serbs by "helping it to stand on its own feet", and that latter army "defended Serbian territory" and "protected the Serbian people". When they say that "in Croatia and BH, JNA fought for the right of the Serbian people" to determine its own future, they disclose its real nature and role - as the imperial force in the service of a political plan. That plan sees the Croatian and Bosnian territories as a unified whole which must be conquered for the realization of the project of a "Greater Serbia", following the international and internal situation.

The military-strategic operative plan for the occupation of Croatia and BH was put in action by JNA only gradually. JNA did not disclose its real intentions, but it used sufficient adaptability to keep its general superiority. The operation was conducted on only one strategic battlefield, while the other was left to the "new Serbian army" which was to guard

the conquered regions. Using its initial large advantage in weaponry, JNA was able to adapt its plan by determining the place and time of the attacks, the length of the standstills and the position of the axial point, but it could not control the wastes of manpower and technology, which depended upon the ability of the defenders.

When it reached its "strategic apex in the area of western BH in spring of 1992", JNA transformed into three Serbian armies - "Serbian Army of Krajina", "Army of Serbian Republic" and "Army of Yugoslavia", which remained under a common command and continued the aggression by entering into conflicts of low intensity and partly middle intensity. That situation could be overturned only by means of a clean attack operation, which would defeat not so much the Serbian army (armies) as their strategic plan. After the final operations of Croatian forces, Serbian political and military leaders understood that they did not have the strategic superiority any more, and that the strategic balance was moved to the line Danube - Bosna - Neretva (three rivers), which stretches between 50 and 300 kilometres of distance from the "western Serbian border", so they accepted the agreements.

At this point, it is useful to recall what Clausewitz said: nobody starts a war (or rather, nobody in his right mind should attempt it) without a clear idea in his head about his objective and strategy.

The aggressor is always a "peace-lover" and always attempts to conquer foreign territory without raising resistance. In order to stop the aggressor, one must be ready to wage a war. When Croatia fought the war, whether in its initial or final phase, it always had only one choice. In the initial phase, when it had no weapons, the only choice was "strategic defence", and in the final phase, the only choice was "strategic attack", because it introduced a new balance of powers and tested its own capabilities when compared with the enemy defensive force.

Only an integral approach on the level of strategic analysis can provide the answers to "what", "when" and "why" of particular actions, because the analysis of specific actions leads to oversimplification. War is not and cannot be an oversimplification caused by one's point of view or, even worse, one's momentary political goal. Even if aggression is an impulsive act, war is not, and its solution is not a matter of moments. For that reason, every analysis of our Homeland war must include a judgement about "what has been done and what are the results", and not a judgement about what should be done or should have been done.

The imperial idea of a "Greater Serbia" in its final consequence had to lead to the aggression. According to that idea, the main subject to be crushed was Croatia. It means that Croatia was forced to fight, and emerged "victoriously establishing its independence", thereby confirming **THE POWER OF STRATEGY**.