

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

MEDIA REPORTS

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CAA not officially behind rallies at Croatian embassies

Vecernji list
By Zoran Kresic

August 4/5, 2005

The Croatian American Association (CAA) announced that as an institution it would not stand behind the rallies scheduled to be held in front of Croatian embassies and consulates throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Operation Storm.

Its members and sympathizers, however, will attend rallies scheduled to begin at noon in several American cities.

In the interest of the association's unity and because of misinterpretations regarding political influences coming from parties in Croatia, CAA president George Rudman decided to withdraw from organizing the rallies, which are meant to criticize official Zagreb's relation towards the Homeland War and General Ante Gotovina.

The otherwise never divided representatives of the Croatian diaspora, though at times confrontational, have been waging a powerful and at times dirty campaign during the last month concerning the purpose of the rallies.

One group of Croat émigrés close to HDZ in the United States even equated the rally organizers with Serb propaganda on the genocidal Operation Storm, while several Croat organizations, such as the CAA, simply wished to express support for General Gotovina.

Croatia slams "inappropriate" Belgrade statements on its 1995 military operation

Agence France Presse

August 4, 2005

ZAGREB - Croatia on Thursday slammed 'inappropriate' statements of Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica describing the 1995 military operation that ended their four-year war as ethnic cleansing.

"Following recent false accusations from Belgrade, which are not contributing to the further development of ties between Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro, the Croatian government points to historic fact that Operation Storm's sole aim was to liberate occupied territory," a statement said.

In Operation Storm the Croatian army regained control over a major part of its territory which had been held by Belgrade-backed breakaway Serbs, retaking the central Knin region.

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It triggered the flight of some 200,000 Serbs into today's Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia, while hundreds of civilians were killed, according to the UN war crimes court.

Croatia marks on Friday the tenth anniversary of the fall of Knin, the stronghold of Serb rebels, to the Croatian army on the second day of Operation Storm.

In Belgrade, Kostunica, who attended a mass in memory of the victims of Operation Storm, said the operation was "the biggest case of ethnic cleansing since the Second World War.

"Ten years later, there is still no justice or recognition of the truth," he added in a statement.

But Zagreb retorted that "the biggest responsibility for the flight of Croatian Serbs in 1995 is on the exponents of the policy to carve out a Greater Serbia, who manipulated their own people," in reference to former Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic, currently standing trial at the UN war crimes court.

The commander of Operation Storm, General Ante Gotovina, was indicted in 2001 on war crimes charges by The Hague-based tribunal, and has been on the run since then.

Croatian president says "We prevented a second Srebrenica"

RFE/RL

August 4, 2005

Croatia on 4 August marks a national holiday linked to the 10th anniversary of Operation Storm, which ended the 1991-95 ethnic Serb rebellion in central Croatia and the Dalmatian hinterland, RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service reported.

In Serbia, gatherings of refugees and memorial services for the dead are scheduled, and several leading politicians on 3 August criticized Storm as an act of "ethnic cleansing" (see "RFE/RL Newslines," 1 and 2 August 2005).

Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sander told the Vienna daily "Die Presse" of 4 August that such charges are "pure nonsense," adding that those who fled had been instructed to do so by Belgrade. Sander stressed that Storm enabled Croatian troops not only to free their own country but to break the Serbian siege across the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina of the mainly Muslim town of Bihac. "There we prevented a second Srebrenica" massacre, he maintained, adding, "I am very proud of the action of the Croatian Army and police."

Asked about the future of the 1995 Dayton peace agreement that ended the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict, Sander called Dayton a "historic achievement" that has, however, served its purpose.

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He argued that "time has come for Bosnia-Herzegovina to emancipate itself" from foreign tutelage, stressing that "we must take care that the Croats as the smallest [of the three main ethnic groups]...do not lose their status" as the legal equals of the Serbs and Muslims.

Jovic extends congratulations to Sanader and Mesic

FENA

August 4, 2005

BiH Presidency Chair Ivo Miro Jovic extended congratulations to Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and Croatian President Stjepan Mesic on the occasion of the Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day.

Jovic said that "that operation" was the most important moment in the recent Croatian history.

"The liberation of the ancient capital Knin, as well as large part of the sovereign Croatia was a colossal military victory that contributed to the final defeat of the aggressor and has jointly accelerated the completion of military operations in BiH as well", Jovic said.

"We are proud that a significant number of BiH citizens also took part in that operation which has forever thwarted Milosevic's project of creating Serbia along the Karlobag-Virovitica line", Jovic said.

Agreement signed on dual citizenship between BiH and Croatia

FENA

August 4, 2005

Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and BiH Council of Ministers Chair Adnan Terzic on Thursday signed the Agreement on double citizenship between the two countries.

"We have a content of the contract that presumes equitability of both countries, and I hope that this agreement would be signed during the Prime Minister Sanader's visit to Sarajevo this fall", said Terzic, referring to the Contract on property-legal relations, which has been harmonized, but not signed, Hina reports.

When asked why the RS is opposing this agreement, Terzic responded that it is important that the RS Directorate for Property-Legal Relations is not opposing it.

The Agreement on dual citizenship was signed by Croatian Minister of Interior Ivica Karin and BiH Minister of Civil Affairs Safet Halilovic.

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Terzic and Sanader supported the working of the interstate commission for verifying the state border.

“We are committed to forwarding the Agreement to the parliaments for immediate ratification”, said Terzic.

The said agreement was concluded in line with principles of the Badinter Commission from 1991.

In the joint statement, accepted after the talks, Sanader and Terzic strongly supported the reformatory efforts of the two countries directed towards supporting the Euro-Atlantic perspective of Croatia and BiH.

Sanader said he believes that the two countries that shared the common past would now share the common future, and Terzic said that “our relations must be viewed through the prism of EU integration”.

The matter of free trade, in which, according to Terzic, “certain problems exist,” will be resolved through signing the free trade treaties with the other countries.

Terzic noted that “BiH does not wish to endanger the fact that Croatia is the greatest exporter to BiH”.

Sanader and Terzic also talked about the status of Croats in BiH, Port Ploce and realization of European corridor 5C.

Mesic meets Terzic

FENA

August 4, 2005

Croatian President Stjepan Mesic held talks with BiH Council of Ministers Chair Adnan Terzic in Zagreb on Thursday.

They underlined that both sides are prepared for stronger cooperation and concluded that the number of outstanding issues is constantly being reduced, but reminded that the remaining ones need to be resolved in open dialogue.

They also confirmed that both sides have the same strategic objective – joining Euro-Atlantic structures.

Also on Thursday Terzic met with Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and after the meeting they initialed the Agreement on Dual Citizenship and harmonised the Agreement on Property-Right Relations.

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BiH Embassy in Zagreb has only one Croat

Vecernji list
By Dejan Jazvic

August 4/5, 2005

Ethnic representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina's diplomatic and consular institutions throughout the world is in complete disarray and does not follow the principle of parity or proportional representation.

There are only four Croats in four BiH embassies on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

According to information confirmed by the Foreign Ministry, among 11 diplomats and personnel in Zagreb, only one is Croat and holds the position of minister-counselor. Four positions, including ambassador, belong to Serbs, while Bosniaks hold six.

In the BiH embassy in Belgrade, the situation is insignificantly better for Croats. Besides Ambassador Tomislav Leko, the only BiH diplomatic institution in Serbia and Montenegro currently only employs one other Croat, a driver. The position of first secretary, which belongs to Croats, has not yet been filled. The remaining eight positions belong to Serbs, Bosniaks and "others."

Of the seven diplomats working in the embassy in Ljubljana, only one is Croat, four are Bosniak and two are Serb.

There is not a single Croat in the embassy in Macedonia.

Such an ethnic distribution in the most important diplomatic centers for BiH is a result of the latest employment systematization, signed by Foreign Minister Mladen Ivanic.

The principle used by the Foreign Ministry is highly questionable. It resulted in five positions out of 29 being filled by Croats.

We learned that ethnic representation is also inappropriate in a majority of BiH's remaining diplomatic and consular institutions throughout the world. Some 15 embassies do not have a single Croat. Besides most embassies in Arab and Asian countries, there are also no Croats in important European countries, such as Switzerland, Denmark. Embassies in Canada, Turkey, South Africa and Israel also are without Croats.