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**TIME OF CHANGES
FROM "AGROKOMERC AFFAIR" IN 1987 TO THE SDA PRE-ELECTION
RALLY IN VELIKA KLADUŠA IN 1990**

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Introduction

In the second half of the eighties, there started dissolution of the single state of South Slavs. This process also brought with it the disappearance of a socio-economic system, Yugoslav socialism, which communists and Communist Party were building in this country from 1945. (KPJ/SKJ¹). Many are prone to claiming that it was actually Tito's death (1980) that made the dissolution of the single state start. True or not, such a position contains a theoretically important point for deliberation on history and historical processes. It is a question of strength and power of events/personalities, that is, the issue of an impact of a certain event/personality on the currents of history. That theoretical problem, also, appears when we speak about historical development of Bihaćka krajina (northwestern part of BiH with bosniak majority), maybe, with more strength than in other parts of SFRY (BiH).

At the end of the eighties, events unfolded in Yugoslavia one after the other. Many of these events, therefore, had significant impact on both the situation in the state, and the societies², which were directly linked to some of them. However, many processes (social and economic integration, appearance of a single cultural field) abruptly ended. In Bihaćka Krajina, which is my *case study*, it happened with the "Agrokomerc Affair". It was of multiple significance to this area, since it generated several ominous changes.

¹ KPJ – Communist party of Yugoslavia, SKJ – League of communists in Yugoslavia

² I use the noun's plural here because I am of the opinion that in Yugoslavia and/or Bosnia and Herzegovina there did not exist one single society, naturally not even within the framework of the national corps, but it was about heterogeneous groups, which may be described by their emphasized regional characteristic (Krajišnik, Šumadinac, Dalmatinac, etc). In some way, only these communities may be seen as the ones with high level of social grouping.

At both symbolic, and practical, life, level, "Agrokomerc Affair"³ meant the end of modernization, and processes related to it. The opening of the Krajina society to the then socio-realistic tendencies, which started in mid-sixties, was interrupted. There was precluded the development of communications, not only related to transportation, but primarily to social communications and exchange, as part of the modernization process (Wheler: 2002, 57). The liquidation of the Bihaćka Bank, which happened due to the bonds' affair in which *Agrokomerc* was involved, as the most important regional financial institution, is the best indicator of that situation, since economic and commercial flows were totally interrupted. Financial insecurity, the characteristic of this area through centuries, and something which in the minds of the population had, until recently, been part of everyday life, was again knocking on the door.

In this article I'll offer insight on the *Affair*, which is produced and started in Yugoslav capital Belgrade, what was beginning of loosing Yugoslav supranational identity⁴ among Krajišniks. Thus, SDA pre-election rally in Velika Kladuša (September 1990.), which I also explore in my work, was victorious for re/birth of Bosniaks/Muslims and there is strong connection between those two events. Gallery of figures appears in dramatic ravel what can be hard to follow for those who are not involved in Yugoslav history. Nevertheless, I hope that main narrative, which deals with social changes, will be comprehensive for the readers.

The Agrokomerc development and influences on development

Maybe the best witness to the influence of politics on economic situation, and the terrifying complexity of that influence, is Agrokomerc. On the basis of what happened with this agricultural-food company in 1987, and also its development in the early seventies, it is possible to follow all the power and charge of political influence, when it comes to the economic development of Bihaćka Krajina. It is also possible to detect, although it looks theoretically strained, and has a form of conspiracy theory, the beginnings of destruction of the former state due to changed political relations, and especially due to what was going on in SR Serbia and among Serbian intellectual elite. It is absolutely possible and rational to claim that this example, actually, clearly shows neuroticism of the Yugoslav politics, firstly its military-defence concept, which, by its projections, as it would prove afterwards, made a disservice to

³ In a separate chapter, I will offer a breakdown of the development of the Agrokomerc factory of Velika Kladuša, and the manner in which this affair was produced. I consider it very important for understanding the Krajina society generally, and all the changes and earthquakes that happened, and are still present in Bihaćka Krajina, and among other things, concern the Bosniak nation construction.

⁴ It is better to say that was start point of loosing faith in yugoslavism for muslim population of Krajina.

the areas of strategic importance for potential military operations (defence from the East or West), while in the changed political realities formed after already mentioned Tito's death (1980), those areas were becoming extremely vulnerable, and susceptible to all sorts of manipulations.

A broader reflection upon the development of the factory is necessary for the purpose of understanding how the modernization process in Bihaćka Krajina unfolded, in which Agrokomerc played a leading role. The path the factory followed, from its beginning to its end, is a specific conjuncture, which transformed the Krajina society and was to introduce it into new social realities. In the seventies and eighties of the 20th century, it was actually happening, despite all the difficulties of the Yugoslav socialism.

Bihaćka Krajina was one of the most important areas for the army, therefore the influence of military establishment was huge, and it was crucial for its commercial and economic progress. Having cooperated with the Army, this region positioned itself under the aegis of the circles in JNA (*Yugoslav Liberation Army*), and in such manner, established links which could not easily break. Potential weakening of the Army would weaken the very region, which happened in the end, and Agrokomerc was a personification of all these relations, and situations. Therefore, due to the entirety of social life, and unique path of the modernization processes in Bihaćka Krajina, Agrokomerc may be considered, as academician Muhamed Filipović said, “an example of the negative influence of command economy, and political and social relations based on it, which were the product of interests of a certain political oligarchy“. (Filipović: 2007, 78.)

The factory was founded in 1969, having grown from a general agricultural cooperative, a form of agricultural action established in former Yugoslavia, which was an attempt to include the farmers into the process of production, and product placement.⁵ This agricultural cooperative's headquarters was in Maljevac, in neighboring SR Croatia, close to its border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was afterwards moved to Velika Kladuša. Till 1972, the factory's name was Agromerkantilija. In 1972, its name was changed to Agrokomerc.⁶ Both names were to show that agricultural production, but also the placement of the products, was

⁵ AFBH, MB (1987), 318/87

⁶ Krajina, 18.9.1987. (Kako je Fikret "gradio" komunizam) (*How Fikret „built“ communism*)

something which would determine a character of the factory, and that it was the direction of its development. The characteristic of the development of the Velika Kladuša municipality was also that no “giants”⁷ came to this area with its capacities, which was the official economic policy of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian political leadership. It certainly sheds different light on the then economic flows in the Bihaćka Krajina area.

Agrokomerc developed on the area of 668 square kilometers, while AIPK and UPI, the two biggest BH agricultural companies, covered 10 377, actually 11 099 square kilometres (Uzelac: 2005, 219-220). The size of population was approximately proportionate to the spatial relations. In the overall investments, not only the ones from the Fund for Underdeveloped, in the period between 1981-1985, Agrokomerc participated with 22,8%, and only AIPK was ahead of it with 24,1% participation (Uzelac: 2005, 219). This data also very clearly shows that the Velika Kladuša giant had a very good „background infrastructure“. If we add to it the claim by Milan Uzelac⁸ that the best loans were given to Agrokomerc, then it is absolutely clear that this factory enjoyed a special status (Uzelac: 2005, 273).

Taking into account that the majority of the agricultural production in this area was based in the individual sector, huge attention was given to the cooperation with households. Cooperation was an important segment for the progress of Bihaćka Krajina, which was one of the most backward areas in the whole of Yugoslavia. Emancipation of the population, as much as economic prosperity, happened through involvement of a great number of the Krajina families into social flows. Before, the population moved within its properties and villages only, and in this period it started to function in a broader area. They got to know the functioning of institutions, the norms, and laws. In one word, they were becoming a part of a larger community. The majority of them started to send their children to school.

Several discussions I had with very important informants, Mujo Košić⁹ and Fikret Čelebić¹⁰, contributed a lot to my understanding of the power of this factory, and the ways it

⁷ Giants were biggest state factories which had a possibility to dislocate their production in smaller communities. It was, according to strategy of Bosnian government, its obligation.

⁸ Milan Uzelac was member of Bosnian presidency and one of the strongest Bosnian politicians when Affair starts.

⁹ Mujo Košić was Fikret Abdić's spokesperson, and his chief of staff. Upon his insistence, I did not record our conversation, which happened in Sarajevo on June 28, 2007.

functioned. Apart from having been involved in industrial espionage and “copying” of recipes (the most interesting product, Vegedor, was a copy of Vegeta¹¹, and there was the whole series of such products), it paid retired scientists to disclose certain production secrets, bribed everyone, including OUN officials (Organization of United Nations), for the purpose of getting certain programs. So it happened that because of selling its goods to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and some other structures, it bribed a UN expert, who was in Istria (Croatia), with a yacht he wanted to have. In the action of bribing, the main role, to the benefit of Agrokomerc, was played by JNA. Also, the main Dalmatian food supplier, Brodokomerc from Rijeka, gave it the opportunity to itself determine the percentage of the Agrokomerc food that would be sold in shops and hotels in Dalmatia, and what was left, was to be distributed to other agricultural-food producers from the country. They stated that Podravka suffered most from the power of Agrokomerc, which, without any problem, and instead of the Koprivnica producer, could have placed as many of its products as it wanted. When the affair started unfolding, "Brodokomerc" was criticized for the specific cooperation it had with Agrokomerc, which it explained in an absolutely simple way. The Velika Kladuša giant was the best business partner in Yugoslavia and it was easiest to work with it.¹²

The working group established by the Executive Council of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina on June 5, 1987, collected numerous statistical indicators of the factory's development. The head of the team was Kasim Umičević, the deputy governor of the People's Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dodik: 2003, 85). This was the first concrete measure the Bosnian-Herzegovinian leadership undertook in the attempt to get a realistic picture of what had happened, and what was going on in Agrokomerc. The analysis was completed on July 28, 1987, and referred to the period 1981–1985. Somewhat earlier, on March 17, 1987, the Commission for Agrokomerc was formed, which was under jurisdiction of the Republic's police, that is the Department of State Security (Dodik: 2003, 30). The work of this government body was the most important with regard to the Agrokomerc Affair, and the way the affair was initiated. The fact that the role of the Republic's police became so important that almost nothing could have been resolved without Duško Zgonjanin, the head of the Department for the State Secu-

¹⁰ Fikret Čelebić was, for some time, a director of OUR Transport (*organization of associated work*) in Agrokomerc, and my conversation with him helped me a lot, although he gave general indicators of the cooperation between JNA and Agrokomerc. Upon his insistence, I did not record our conversation, which happened on August 28, 2007 in Bihać.

¹¹ It is spice, very popular among Yugoslavs.

¹² Vjesnik, 13.9.1987. (Drugi "komerc") (*The second „comerc“*)

riety (SDB) having been present at all political forums, is a sufficient indicator of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina during 1987 (Uzelac: 2005, 183).

The analysis of the Working Group of the Republic's Executive Council showed that from 1982 to 1986, average annual rate of production increase in Agrokomerc exceeded 10%, while the export tripled from 1984 on.¹³ All this indicated that the factory's business was positive, and that it was export-oriented. Overall income in 1985 was 132,721 million dinars, and in 1986 it was 332,385 million dinars. In 1986, export's value was around 42 million dollars¹⁴. The Federal Secretariat for Finances gave information that in 1986, the company was passive export wise. It imported goods whose value was 120 million dollars, while it exported goods (mainly not from its own production) of the value of around 70 million dollars (iron, sugar, corn)¹⁵. These data provided by the Federal Secretariat for Finances, especially for 1986 and II and III quarter of 1987, were actually more accurate, because Agrokomerc did indeed export products of other companies, among which concrete steel produced in the Zenica Steelworks mostly, and it was exported through the Rijeka harbor.

There are several different opinions on the period during which Agrokomerc and SR Bosnia and Herzegovina disagreed with regard to development plans for the Velika Kladuša factory. The economic stabilization program prepared by the Kraigher Commission (DPES) was certainly one of the delimiters, taking into account that it insisted on reducing the investments. With regard to that, the Central Committee of SK (*Communist Party*) (CK SK BiH) passed the Action Plan with guidelines on investments. Among other things, Agrokomerc was also suggested to “slow down” and reconcile its development with the regulations of the Commission and potentials of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina¹⁶. These guidelines were not accepted by the Agrokomerc Business Board, and the factory's policy followed a different path. Therefore, at its session on July 19, 1984, the Executive Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina warned Agrokomerc that it could not go for new investments, which was in compliance with the Republic's leadership policy¹⁷. It requested that the management first works on consolidation, and then thinks about further development. Since the factory did not respond to the calls

¹³ AFBH, MB (1987), 318/87

¹⁴ AFBH, MB (1987), 318/87

¹⁵ AFBH, MB (1987), 307/87

¹⁶ 10. session of CK SK BiH, 25 – 26.

¹⁷ AFBH, MB (1987), 309/87

from the Executive Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was warned again in September 1986 to harmonize its development¹⁸. As stated in the document, at that time, Agrokomerc attacked Bosnian-Herzegovinian leadership for the step-motherly attitude of the Republic toward Krajina¹⁹.

The president of the Business Board of Agrokomerc, Fikret Abdić, claimed that the support of Bosnia and Herzegovina to his factory started diminishing from 1979, while Milan Uzelac states that the best investment resources from 1980 to 1985 went indeed to that factory (Uzelac: 2005, 273). These positions are not irreconcilable, and are contradictory only at first sight. Although Agrokomerc received the best loans, it did not receive them from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but from the other side. That is what Uzelac failed to mention, although he knew what the situation was like with regard to investments in Agrokomerc.

That is the reason Ivan Brigić, a member of CK SKJ-u (*Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party*) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the well-known session of this political body on September 8, 1987, said that Agrokomerc had provided resources from outside Bosnia and Herzegovina ever since 1984²⁰. According to him, that is when the Krajina giant and the Republic separated. Also, very reasonable question was posed by Petar Dodik²¹, a member of the SR BIH Presidency. He asked about where did Abdić find all that strength to defy everything, and push for his own concept!²²

Dodik's claim was true, and everyone who met Abdić could feel his despotism, especially the representatives of economic subjects from Bihaćka Krajina. Velika Kladuša, which is interesting, had ceased to be among “underdeveloped” even in 1979, and yet, Agrokomerc kept receiving resources from the Fund for Underdeveloped. Brigić's position was actually based on his information about the business performance of Agrokomerc after 1984, and he detected well the time when the stronger financing of Agrokomerc by others started, although it is not true that it had not happened in earlier times. It was connected to a very important military issue, about which more will be said afterwards.

¹⁸ AFBH, MB (1987), 318/87

¹⁹ AFBH, MB (1987), 318/87

²⁰ AFBH, MB, 179/87

²¹ He, also, wrote a book about Agrokomerc and gave his view on Affair.

²² AFBH, MB, 313/87

Due to difficult economic situation in Yugoslavia, and also a rigid politics of the BH leadership, especially when it was about implementing DPES, there started the game with bonds. Director of the Internal Bank, Alija Alešević, claimed that from 1978 till 1987, not even one month passed without bonds having been issued, which caused “siphoning” of operating resources into investments.²³ In 1983, there started intensive use of bonds, while in 1980, there happened the first affair when the director of Bihaćka Bank, Esad Mujakić, fired the director of the branch office in Velika Kladuša, Hasan Mehić²⁴. Intensified use of bonds, therefore, matches Brigić's position on provision of resources from outside Bosnia and Herzegovina. This “first affair” ended in such a manner that Bihaćka Bank bought all the bonds that Agrokomerc subsequently paid. The public knew nothing about it, and the case was soon forgotten. Journalist Amira Bajrić who used the documentation of the bank and spoke about the affair from 1980, afterwards asked herself how would things be resolved²⁵. From what was going on in the fall of 1987, it was obvious that many things were very much different compared to 1980, which the journalist herself could not have presumed. In 1980, the game with bonds was not of the scope of the one from 1987, and there was not a huge amount of resources that would be the subject of speculation. Still, it can be concluded from this example what was the principle of Agrokomerc's business, and how it observed the law. More or less, in 1987 the same situation happened, but it was about a much bigger amount. The difference was only in the fact that in 1980, the subject that provided resources for Agrokomerc had political power and could have controlled the situation, while in 1987, he was not in a favourite position, and was powerless.

There is yet another segment important for Agrokomerc business performance. Atomized property in individual sector represented a problem for the authorities, which tried to raise the level of agricultural production. Very often, at the most important forums, a need for association was emphasized, and there were attempts to find modes for that association.²⁶ It was also the conclusion of the Commission that analyzed the agricultural situation at the 7th Congress of SK BIH held in May 1978, which supported the planned objectives defined ten

²³ Krajina, 17.06.1988. (Trećeoptuženi otkriva karte) (*Third defendant opens his cards*)

²⁴ Krajina, 11.09.1987. (Poigrali se i 1980.) (*They even played in 1980*)

²⁵ Krajina, 11.09.1987. (Poigrali se i 1980.) (*They even played in 1980*)

²⁶ Krajina, 19.05.1978. (Udruživanje u poljoprivredi – dugoročan zadatak) (*Association in economy – long-term task*)

years ago. One of the logical steps for Bihaćka Krajina was the merger of Kladuša's Agrokomerc with PPPK Bihaćka Krajina, since they were the two most important agricultural companies, which could have been complementary to each other.²⁷ Capital investments, according to the Bihać economists, could not have been sufficient for the development of the food industry, therefore the merger was necessary. It particularly referred to the question of land which PPPK Krajina had, and which Agrokomerc needed. Still, such a form of cooperation was smoothly rejected by Agrokomerc, and Fikret Abdić called rumours about the merger ill-intentioned.²⁸

Although they did not want to cooperate with PPPK Krajina, without any authorization and without any problems, Agrokomerc took their land in Cazin for their purposes! This happened in September 1984, and it all ended with charges brought a year after, in September 1985.²⁹ The epilogue is that the discussion on this started only when Agrokomerc Affair started, and when this factory ceased to enjoy political protection. The attitude of Agrokomerc toward PPPK Krajina is a good indicator of an attitude of the Velika Kladuša giant toward all the factories in that area, irrespective of the economic branch they came from. Namely, Agrokomerc was developing, so that in the middle of the eighties, it had, apart from agricultural-food industry, very good transportation means and construction-design industry. Everyone who stood in its way, was accused and punished, and the best example is a construction company Grupkes headed by Mr. Muhamed Talakić³⁰.

The question open for almost a decade, the merger of the two agricultural-food companies, culminated, therefore, in 1986, the year which was very important for Agrokomerc. Namely, the new investment cycle was to start, and there was a problem of not having enough money, and the situation could have even been described as quite alarming. It was also the period of intensified construction of infrastructure, for which the resources, 15 billion old dinars, were provided by self-contributions, while 70 billions were planned to „somehow be found from somewhere“³¹ This fourth phase of the development of Agrokomerc would have been successful if it had happened several years earlier, taking into account the then constella-

²⁷ Krajina, 05.12.1980. (Šanse u saradnji "Krajine" i "Agrokomerca") (*Chances in cooperation between Krajina and Agrokomerc*)

²⁸ Krajina, 21.02.1986. (Otpori sa prizvukom ličnog) (*Resistance with a hint of personal*)

²⁹ Krajina, 11.9.1987. (Kad Fikret zaore) (*When Fikret starts tilling*)

³⁰ Krajina, 8.1.1988. (Stara pjesma novi izvođači) (*Old song, new performers*)

³¹ Krajina, 14.2.1986. (Istorijski razvojni korak) (*Historic developmental step forward*)

tion of relations in Yugoslavia, and untouched power of Agrokomerc supporters. In 1986, Bosnia and Herzegovina was under the stronger supervision of Serb ideologists, and its every error was thoroughly analyzed with a wish to be used for their goals.

Influences on development

One segment is very important when we talk about Agrokomerc development. The already mentioned lack of capacities of big factories in the Velika Kladuša municipality was compensated with the construction of their own company. In order for a municipality to economically develop in such manner, a special support was needed. Very early, Armed Forces of SFRY (OS), actually the two components of which OS consisted, Territorial Defence (TO) and Yugoslav Peoples' Army (JNA) interfered with the development of Agrokomerc. That this interference was in variance with official policy and economic developments is clear, even on the basis of several short sentences in the daily *Oslobođenje*, about the visit of a very important delegation, headed by Hamdija Pozderac, to Velika Kladuša and Cazin.³² The goal of this visit in June 1971 allegedly was to visit soldiers' organizations in this area, and while there, to examine the capacities of these municipalities for the development of agriculture and forestry.³³ Lieutenant-general Franjo Herljević³⁴, the commander of the headquarters of the BiH People's Defence Force, major-general Nikola Prodanović, Dragan Rodić, the secretary of the BiH People's Defence Secretariat, Ratomir Fuks, the secretary for agriculture BiH, and Šukrija Bijedić, this area's deputy in the BiH Assembly were in the delegation. The two-day visit of such a senior delegation was certainly to draw the attention of the public, but the report about it was only couple of sentences long, placed in a page corner in the Sarajevo daily „Oslobodjenje“ without any photos added. This delegation could have been considered the top leadership that commanded the Republic's Army, that is the TO (Territorial Defence), which indicated the character of the Agrokomerc rise.

So, this example should be used for better understanding of the very development of Agrokomerc, which de facto was becoming a part of the JNA (Yugoslav Peoples Army), that

³² *Oslobođenje*, 14.6.1971. (Borci u centru pažnje) (*Soldiers, center of attention*)

³³ In Cazin and Velika Kladuša, forestry cannot develop for the simple reason which is that this area has no mountains, and the land there is good for agriculture and orchards. In Cazin, there was a nursery, which was a specific „Šipad“ logistic support to the forestry development in Bihać, Bosanska Krupa, Bosanski Petrovac and Ključ.

³⁴ Franjo Herljević came to Bosnia and Herzegovina with a task to organize the Republic's TO. Before that, he was a minister in the Federal Department of Interior.

is the part of Armed Forces, when the arms industry was in question³⁵. I will support this position of mine with the facts in the text to follow, which are narrowly connected to the defence system that was being constructed in Yugoslavia. When speaking about the Agrokomerc clan, Milan Uzelac offers his position that it was established in the beginning of the seventies, in any case not earlier than 1970 (Uzelac: 2005, 221). With this position, Uzelac, to a certain extent, confirms that Agrokomerc started to develop separately from the time of its relocation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, by which the relocation of the agricultural cooperative from Maljevac, in Croatia, to Velika Kladuša could also have had completely new connotations.

There are several facts that confirm the Agrokomerc's connection with JNA (Yugoslav Peoples Army), which, as admiral Mamula confirmed, had „direct cooperation with the economies of the republics“ anyway, and was even the best business partner with whom many in Yugoslavia wanted to cooperation (Mamula: 2000, 287). Petar Dodik, the member of the Presidency of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, when thinking „Agrokomerc Affair“, and writing a book about it, concluded that it had to be the case that Agrokomerc received resources through „certain“ connections, unclear and unknown to him (Dodik: 2003, 44). Milan Uzelac, the former Bosnian politician who at the time of the Agrokomerc Affair held the office of the president of the CK SK BIH Presidency, was of the similar opinion. His conclusion was that Agrokomerc very early started its development on a „different track“ (Uzelac: 2003, 256). This conviction of Uzelac corresponds to his opinion on the existence of the Agrokomerc clan as of early seventies. Uzelac emphasizes that it is interesting that Fikret Abdić did not fight for the position of Agrokomerc at the Central Committee (CK) sessions, or sessions of the Assembly, which would have been normal, and takes this fact as a proof of the existence of the clan, which was resolving the problems of Agrokomerc outside the system. (Uzelac: 2003, 215). When discussing the position of Uzelac, the problem is his strong insistence that the clan existed, and that it was led by the Pozderac brothers. According to him, everything was coming from that „kitchen“, and everything ended with it. Of course, it is only partially true, and the essence of the factory's development, and the affair, was neither discovered, nor described in his book. It was actually unrealistic to expect from Uzelac to be honest and contribute to getting to know the real truth about the affair, since he was also involved in the Greater

³⁵ JNA Arms Industry was focused on the production of arms and tools, and that is what is defined with this term: arms industry. However, in the General Staff they also had to take care of food for the Army, and thanks to Hakija Pozderac, Agrokomerc imposed itself as the right solution. This actually made this factory strategically important for the Army, and its importance only increased with time.

Serbia project, consciously or unconsciously, which was confirmed by some of my interlocutors who were in the very center of events at the time of the affair (Enver Ramić, Ismet Hrle). The same conclusion was drawn by the writer of the feuilleton on the life and death of Hamdija Pozderac, published in *Dnevni Avaz* in 1997³⁶.

From the beginning of the seventies, Agrokomerc cooperated well with the German factory Lohman. Even the Old master (Lohman's owner), as Alešević described him, came to Velika Kladuša, and to the Adriatic Coast, and it was organized by the Agrokomerc Business Board³⁷. This factory which was also active in poultry industry, had very good machines which, at that time, were of supreme quality for this type of production. It is interesting that Lohman helped the Livno area after a problem it had in the poultry industry in 1971, and the loss of a flock of chicken due to bird's flu, characterized as plague³⁸. The cooperation between Agrokomerc and German Lohman was very good till 1979, but was abruptly terminated in that very year.

Reasons for the termination of cooperation with Lohman, according to Alija Alešević, the director of the Internal Bank of Agrokomerc for many years, related to Agrokomerc financial reorientation. Military resources, that is the resources from the military funds, as of 1979, started arriving to Agrokomerc in huge amounts³⁹. These funds became available due to the opening of the transportation service in the Velika Kladuša area, and according to Alešević, very soon Belgrade (refers to the military leadership, A.M.) began to fully master the Agrokomerc financial affairs. There was ordered the beginning of cooperation with Czech company Motokoka, which offered very favourable arrangements. Even four arrangements with Czechs were agreed with a help of JNA as the mediator, and they were all extremely favourable. Agrokomerc paid for the machines and other technical products with its goods, that is with items it produced thanks to the machines received from Motokoka company, and not with money⁴⁰. The fourth arrangement was to be implemented in the middle of 1987.

³⁶ *Dnevni avaz*, 16.10.1997. (Life and Death of Hamdija Pozderac 4)

³⁷ Discussion with Alija Alešević, published in Velika Kladuša on November 9, 2006, in the author's archive.

³⁸ *Oslobođenje*, 8.1.1972. (Lohman and „plague“)

³⁹ Discussion of Alija Alešević, November 9, 2006.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The year 1979 was, in many ways, a crucial year for the development of Agrokomerc, and its financial base. It has already been mentioned that Fikret Abdić marked this year as the year from which structures of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian government ceased to help the development of the Velika Kladuša company. Also, 1979 was important for the Velika Kladuša municipality, because it was not underdeveloped any more, that is, it did not have that status, which automatically meant that it should have stopped receiving significant resources from the Fund for Underdeveloped. Irrespective of the above fact, Velika Kladuša continued to receive these resources for several years. It is also necessary to look at the reorientation that happened in this light, but also to understand which was this „other track“ of the development of Agrokomerc. The company was important for the „Big Brother“⁴¹ who, therefore, opened the channels of financing and development, which only privileged were allowed to use.

Such was the position of the one of the Republic's police inspectors who, as he said it, was in the centre of developments, when the affair started. All facilities that Agrokomerc built, according to the then available documentation, were financed by the Army through federal bodies.⁴² These data, says the former inspector from the SDB (*Department for State Security*), he had in his hands, but they disappeared, and one can get them today only from live sources, that is the stories told. Also, when Abdić decided to establish his own television, which was almost impossible to do in the Yugoslavia of the time, military helicopter transported a transmitter for him, and military experts installed it, and enabled broadcasting⁴³. This position, or thesis, as the inspector said, corresponds to the positions by other people, who marked the Army as Agrokomerc's strategic partner (primarily by Alija Alešević, but also by Fikret Čelebić, the former director of OOUR (*Basic Organization of Associated Work*) Transport in Agrokomerc, and by Mujo Koštić, who ended his career in Agrokomerc as Fikret Abdić's chief of staff).

In this period, the JNA had in its program the development of own political and economic – production forces inside the military-industrial complex. This somewhat clarifies Stambolić's⁴⁴ position that it is impossible to conclude, even remotely objectively, what the social and political circumstances were during the fight for and against Yugoslavia if the mili-

⁴¹ I use this Orwellian metaphore for the one who tries to keep everything under control, and in this case, it was certainly JNA.

⁴² Discussion with Enver Ramić, Sarajevo, 12.9.2006. In the author's archive.

⁴³ Discussion with Enver Ramić, 12.9.2006.

⁴⁴ Ivan Stambolić, long-term leading man of the Communist Party of Serbia and a person who introduced Slobodan Milošević to politics. In fact, Milošević was his protégé for many years (See: Stambolić, 1995)

tary leadership in that study remains in the dark (Stambolić: 1995, 184). In the 80's, the military-industrial complex reaches impressive heights which, at the political level, testified to the advantages of the centralized economy which existed inside of it (Špegelj: 2001, 66). It goes without saying that in the centre of this complex of arms industry was the war arsenal, including production of tanks, planes, mortars and rockets but other activities also developed. The JNA's ambitions grew insatiable leading to the Green Plan which developed own agricultural production being released into circulation (Špegelj: 2001, 68). Such an agricultural production could not have been of a more serious scope which is why the Army in the end left its food related logistics to some factories which were not directly included in the Green Plan.

Admiral Branko Mamula, federal secretary for national defence at the time, is one of the most significant individuals in the context of development of Agrokomerc and his influence is very interesting. Namely, the Admiral was known as a creator of a new Yugoslav military doctrine, Total National Defence (*ONO*). His doctrine was founded on the events of the WW II in the context of battles which took place in the territory of Yugoslavia, more precisely of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is why the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina represented for Mamula a bastion of the defence of Yugoslavia shouldn't surprise anyone while the Cazin krajina back in 1942 acted as a source of food for the forces of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (*NOVJ*) in region of the Bihać Republic. For the Admiral, that experience was irreplaceable in the creation of his military–defence philosophy. This role of Cazin and Velika Kladuša in the period of the People's Liberation War (*NOR*) was also pointed out by Mićo Rakić, BiH politician at the time, when visiting this region, who stressed that: "It is not an insignificant experience from the perspective of the Total National Defence the fact that this region was the centre for supply of the *NOVJ* forces with food and clothing."⁴⁵ This was to show very clearly what a geo-strategic position this region has and the awareness of the political and military leadership of that position, as well as the necessity of including that region into all strategic plans which the military–political leadership made.

In order to understand the development of Agrokomerc and influence on that development, it is relevant to understand also the concept of defence of the country which was introduced back in 1968, based on the legacy and achievements of the People's Liberation

⁴⁵ *Oslobođenje* Daily, November 5 1973. (A letter is not reading material but a basis for social action)

Struggle (*NOB*) (Mamula: 2000, 303). This concept was "tried" during a grandiose military exercise named "Freedom 71", which was held in the territory of SR of Slovenia, SR of Croatia and SR of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mamula: 2000, 303). In fact, the main action took place in the regions of Banija, Kordun and bordering regions of Slovenia and Croatia, while the Bihać krajina was, of course, the backdrop and the logistical hub. The military exercise took place during the time when JNA and all other republics were, as Bilandžić put it, "worked up" against Croatia (Bilandžić: 2006, 106). After the exercise, Josip Broz Tito, who attended the manoeuvres, visited Bihać. Actually, this concept, which had been developing in Yugoslavia for a long time, has an interesting history. Between 1958 and 1962, in an extreme secrecy, a team lead by generals Bogdan Oreščanin and Ivan Rukavina developed a study for defense of small countries surrounded by big military blocs (Špegelj: 2001, 51). The study was based on *NOR* and recommended a two-component military force, one trained for the frontal defence and the other for guerrilla fighting. For some reason, the findings of this study fell on deaf ears and were archived away. However, a couple of years later, (after the fall of Aleksandar Ranković, centralistic czar as he was known,) they were used as a foundation of an emerging concept of *ONO* (Špegelj: 2001, 52). General Franjo Tuđman, future president of independent Croatia, also made his contribution to the creation of this doctrine.

As was already mentioned, the implementer and advocate of the *ONO* doctrine was Admiral Branko Mamula.⁴⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina was in that concept the most important link in the established defence chain. According to the Admiral: "Bosnia created a depth of defence from the Soviet – Hungarian grouping to the north and the sea-air-landing grouping of NATO in Italy and the Mediterranean. At one point, Bosnia was viewed as a bastion of the entire defence of the country..." (Mamula: 2000, 295.) Mamula concludes that *NOR* still showed it to be necessary that each region has its free territory, while Bosnia with its central location must be capable of linking and supporting them and commanding combat from its territory (Mamula: 2000, 295). This position of the Admiral alludes to the fact that the Bihać krajina should be the center of the center, in other words, the area where the HQ should be located in case of large-scale military operations. This fact is testified by the following position of the Admiral. *NOR* showed that the area of Lika, Kordun and Banija in Croatia and the area of Bosanska krajina in Bosnia and Herzegovina carried the heaviest burden due to ex-

⁴⁶ It is interesting that Admiral Mamula was born nearby Velika Kladuša, in the Municipality of Vrgin most in Kordun, so knew a lot about that region.

tremely belligerent Serb population. The guerrilla warfare, which is promoted and regarded as very important by the *ONO* concept, proved to be successful, while this region kept a wide Yugoslav area under control. The "Muslim enclave"⁴⁷ in this Serb lake should have been a logistic support, as it was in 1942.

Admiral Mamula was visiting Agrokomerc with the Pozderac brothers and Juro Bilić, at the time the first man of the Communist Party of Croatia, and media were not even then informed of their arrival and presence in Agrokomerc. Actually, the media did not report on that visit but a journalist of the "Krajina" paper in Bihać at the time, Hasan Bišćević, received a "hint" from his editor in chief that he should appear in Velika Kladuša as an important gathering will take place there (Bišćević: 1993, 35). After a general discussion among all the present which was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere, the Admiral, coming behind "the cans of frozen meat", as Bišćević illustratively put it, soon started talking one on one with Fikret Abdić (Bišćević: 1993, 35). Neither this visit nor the already mentioned visit of the BiH military leadership in 1971. received huge coverage in the media. Still, the Chief of Staff came to the small town of Velika Kladuša as the Republic military leadership came in '71. It is really strange that these delegations did not receive media coverage so Hasan Bišćević asked a legitimate question: "Isn't Admiral Mamula on the mission which could have been executed by some army clerk?" (Bišćević: 1993, 36.) It is also interesting that, when it became obvious that Agrokomerc did business outside of the economic logic, the Admiral attempted to save the factory with the assistance of the Croatian leadership, which refused him (Mamula: 2000, 96). The explanation from the SR of Croatia was that they didn't want their involvement to be misinterpreted. (Mamula: 2000, 96).

The visit of the then secretary of defence which I mentioned earlier on most likely took place in the period when it became clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as other Yugoslav republics, does not have the funds for investments and when the *DPES* was accepted. That conclusion can be made although the journalist who was present did not, unfortunately, give a date of this visit. Still, an article was published in the local paper *Krajina* (on

⁴⁷ This is how Rene Peletier, director of the French Culture Centre in Sarajevo, described the Cazin krajina. In 1939, he wrote a book called "Cazin et sa region" which, unfortunately, did not get published due to the events of the WW II. To make matters worse, the book has been misplaced and has yet to be found. The foreword for the book was written by Fehim Spaho, reis – ul – ulema at the time, religious leader of the Muslims in Yugoslavia. (See: Ekmečić, F. 1998.)

February 8, 1985) on the visit of this delegation to Bihać and some companies in Bihać.⁴⁸ Not a single word was mentioned about the visit to Velika Kladuša, which certainly raises suspicion given that the visit took place and that it was recorded by a serious journalist from Bihać, although subsequently.

This article mentions that Hamdija Pozderac and Jure Bilić were in the delegation in Bihać, while Hakija Pozderac joined them in Velika Kladuša, according to Bišćević. One detail, however, is still loose in this chronology. Bišćević mentions a summer day while from the papers it can be noticed that the visit took place in February. However, if Bišćević, journalist of special importance at the time⁴⁹, was present during some summer visit of the Admiral to Agrokomerc, that only serves to corroborate the presented arguments since it would confirm that the Admiral visited a small Bosnian town more than once. It is also indicative to Bišćević that Fikret Abdić built his villa in Volovsko (near Rijeka, Republic of Croatia) after the visit that he mentioned. That is where Admiral Mamula, according to Bišćević, also had his villa which he frequented. An alleged reason for Abdić to build his villa was a sudden onset of hay fever (Bišćević, 1993, 39). From the medical point of view, treating hay fever in this way is absolutely questionable. The Rijeka region, in fact, is not a good place for treatment of that type of allergy due to continuous blossoming and growth of vegetation.

Still, the implementation of *DPES* was not the only reason why Agrokomerc had to get huge investments "under the counter". Very important for resolving this problem seems to have been substantial changes which in that period were under way in the military itself. Namely, the conclusion was made at the military seminar which took place in Belgrade in May of 1982 that Yugoslavia needed to create a new defense strategic focus, which will move westward compared to the existing location in the northeast of the country (Špegelj: 2001, 86). The reasons for such a turn around, according to the opinion of the military leadership of JNA, lay in the weakening of the Warsaw Pact and its helplessness, while there was still danger looming from the West and NATO. This way of thinking of the military leadership was really questionable since the plans which were made in the middle of the 80's can be interpreted in two different ways and which, in fact, in the military sense correspond to the

⁴⁸ Krajina, December 8, 1985. (Positive marks for economic trends)

⁴⁹ It is no secret that there were journalists even in the Bihać krajina who could get hold of information which others couldn't. Hasan Bišćević was one of them, and the first among them was Ilija Mandić, correspondent of the Sarajevo Daily "Oslobođenje" from Bosanska Krupa (in fact, from the Bihać krajina).

plan for aggression against Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Špegelj: 2001, 86). An additional confirmation of the view that the military leadership was saying one thing and doing the other was establishing battle groups which replaced the existing military AORs. The northern battle group with its seat in Belgrade „sucked in“ the 7th military AOR, the seat of which was in Sarajevo. This made Bosnia and Herzegovina a western brim of this battle group, which again in its shape quite resembled the political chart of the Greater Serbia rather than an operational–territorial military unit (Špegelj: 2001, 88). This plan of centralization of the Armed Forces known as "Unity" was fully implemented by the end of 1988 (Marijan: 2003, 11-47).

The military-political control of the western republics seemed a more likely goal that had to be accomplished rather than fear of NATO as they would say. And the story about Agrokomerc, its development and influence, proves that point to a certain extent. Namely, when Agrokomerc was presented with the already mentioned possibility of selling their products to the NATO forces that happened mostly because of JNA.⁵⁰ This fact confirms the existence of relatively good relations between the strongest military organization in the world and the Yugoslav Armed Forces. However, regardless of whether we are talking about the first concept or the second concept (defence against NATO or controlling Croatia and Slovenia), the Bihać krajina and Agrokomerc in it were extremely important in terms of being logistical centres in both cases. Under no circumstances should one disregard the existence of the airport Željavo which existed deep in the Plješevica Mountain, situated on the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. It represented an important link in the strategic chain made in such a way to make the Bihać krajina the centre of defence or even attack.

The following point which shows the degree of involvement of JNA in the events in the Bihać krajina is the approval issued to Agrokomerc to service military vehicles (Bišćević: 1993, 50). However, what makes it strange is the fact that there were no military barracks or military force in Velika Kladuša. If one also takes into account that a tank could be assembled in that service, as some say, the picture becomes clearer in terms of the potential and possi-

⁵⁰ This is a valuable anecdote which confirms the power of Agrokomerc at the time so I will mention it. NATO soldiers in German barracks ate for breakfast one day old egg from Agrokomerc with two yolks, delivered daily from the Osijek airport (CRO). This was great success for the company which in that way demonstrated the high level of technological development as well as its business potential.

bilities of that service.⁵¹ That is why it should not be surprising that Fikret Abdić displayed his mentioned arrogance when the illegal activities with bills of exchange were discovered and asked the BiH leadership "if it knows whether the Krajina people are armed?" (Uzelac: 2005, 280.) It is not clear as to why Karlovac or Bihać did not get the right to service military vehicles which they were able to do. The only logical answer would be that in the defence concept which started developing in 1968, and especially after changing the strategic focus of the defence in the mid 80's, the region of Velika Kladuša and Cazin were to become a logistical hub for the entire Yugoslavia.

After 1980, a series of shocks and strategic changes took place in Yugoslavia. From the point of view of the Bihać krajina, what was significant was that the progress of Agrokomerc was extremely visible due to evident economic dissatisfaction of the whole country. For this region, it meant maintaining more or less normal economic life. Although the Kraigher Commission ordered extreme reduction of investments in all parts of Yugoslavia, that was not implemented in Velika Kladuša. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina ceased to provide the financial support to Agrokomerc, the funds were coming in.⁵² A possible answer to this was that the decision on funding was made by the military leadership due to the change in strategic focus of defence and its transfer to this very region, which is something that General Špegelj wrote about (Špegelj: 2001, 86). Also, in this period, important for raising funds in Agrokomerc was a visit of Admiral Mamula during which the discussion was held on possibilities of exporting turkey meat to NATO (Bišćević: 1993, 36). This string of events contributed to appearance of despotism and a feeling of untouchability of Agrokomerc, which was best personified by its manager Fikret Abdić.

An important person, who had a crucial influence on the events and trends in the economy and politics of the Bihać krajina, and especially of Agrokomerc, was Hakija Pozderac. As a revolutionary from a well known Krajina partisan family, but also as one of the main executors over the rebelled Krajina villagers of 1950, he wielded extreme power in

⁵¹ This was confirmed to me by Alija Alešević (Nov 9, 2006). Also, Milan Uzelac mentions this in his book "A little bit of truth" (2005). He even wrote about the military parade which Abdić organized in Velika Kladuša in May of 1987, which was a precedent and until then unimaginable act to be undertaken by a civilian. This did not get media coverage either, although it certainly deserved it.

⁵² *AFBH, MB* (1987), 315/87

this particular territory.⁵³ Since he was in the Federal bodies for many years already, his ties were strong and reliable. He was even regarded as the keeper of countless secrets (Bišćević: 1993, 36). Without him, the whole plan of Agrokomerc being a great ally to the military would be unimplementable.

Agrokomerc Scandal and Politics of Greater Serbia

"The Agrokomerc scandal" began by fire breaking out in the factory on January 25, 1987. There was a lot of hearsay about the fire and some stories that it could have been set on purpose, but those were never proven.⁵⁴ The management board of the factory was blamed for the fire as they did not install an anti-fire system and thus indirectly contributed to destruction of one of the biggest plants of Agrokomerc. From the point of view of an ordinary citizen, it is unclear as to why the State Security Service (*SDB*) should investigate the fire in the factory as soon as it broke out and that very fact casts a big shadow on the whole scandal. The activities of several republic services focused on Agrokomerc and, as I said, an *SDB* Commission was formed on March 17 in order to investigate illegal activities inside Agrokomerc. The BiH Presidency discussed the issue of Agrokomerc for the first time on April 19, 1987, when support was extended to the factory (Dodik: 2003, 11). In fact, during the entire time until August 11, when a session of the SR BiH Presidency was held, the BiH Presidency's position was to support the development program of the Velika Kladuša factory. This was the second and most important stage of the scandal which put the leadership of the Republic to the great test. Also, on August 11, 1987, the BiH leadership was also divided, which is not surprising if we take into account the role of some politicians (Zgonjanin, Uzelac, Ubiparip) in creating the scandal. The worst thing about it was that this rift that was caused at the time also happened at the national level.⁵⁵

The situation in Yugoslavia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, before the breaking out of the Agrokomerc scandal in 1987, was very chaotic. The breakdown of communism was getting more imminent, while nationalists assumed domination in Yugoslavia. That was espe-

⁵³ The event referred to here is known as the Cazin Rebellion of 1950. Hakija Pozderac was public prosecutor in Banja Luka at the time and was responsible for punishing the rebels. Vera Kržišnik – Bukić wrote about it (1990).

⁵⁴ When talking to Mujo Koštić, I was told that there was also fire in the very important business unit- *Projektant* in the middle of 1986. Everything was burned down and destroyed. The documentation which was there was extremely important.

⁵⁵ *Dnevni avaz Daily*, October 16, 1997. (The Life and Death of Hamdija Pozderac 4)

cially evident among Serb population where there already existed a number of public workers and scientists who quite openly advocated the redefining of the relationships in the country and even recomposition of the country itself. As early as 1986, the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (*SANU*) was published, while Slobodan Milošević was preparing himself to organize a coup in the leadership of the Communist Party of Serbia and in that way assume all power in that Republic.⁵⁶ That is exactly what happened on the September plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Serbia (*CK SKS*) (September 23, 1987) when Ivan Stambolić and other opponents who until then were the leading people of the Communist Party of Serbia, lost power. Beside Ivan Stambolić, the biggest loser was Dragiša Pavlović, president of the Belgrade City Committee of the Communist Party, who was supposed to occupy the place which was taken by Slobodan Milošević. According to the opinion of Admiral Mamula, Milošević did not become the leader of Serbia riding on a wave of unrest of the Kosovo Serbs and call of the intellectual elite for renewal of the Greater Serbia program. Not much is known about the preparations for his ascension to power. The crucial role for the Milošević's "instalment", according to Mamula, was played by general Ljubičić, former JNA commander and a man who replaced general Ivan Gošnjak, who was devoted to Tito, as the Army Chief (Mamula: 2000, 112). The Admiral, according to his testimony, warned Stambolić about Ljubičić's infiltration into JNA and the fact that the general was making very questionable moves, which Stambolić did not take heed of (Mamula: 2000, 112). Stambolić thought that general Ljubičić was still a devoted follower on the Tito's road. He was very wrong. Only later, after having been expelled from the Serbian political scene, will Stambolić say that general Ljubičić had one of the most important roles to play in destruction of Yugoslavia (Stambolić: 1995, 241). The fact that Ljubičić was truly one of the main designers of "the new Serbian supremacy", and probably the main one for the military issues, was evidenced by an argument he had with general Džemil Šarac, long-time president of the Communist Party in JNA. The reason for that argument, as general Šarac stated, was his opinion that Ljubičić turned the Army over to Serb hegemonists (Latić: 2003, 95).

Since Garašanin's "Načertanije", Bosnia and Herzegovina had been a corner stone in the Greater Serbia concepts and an issue which had been given the greatest attention. That

⁵⁶ It is interesting how media played with and exerted influence on the masses on the occasion of the Milošević's rise to power. One of the best examples of it was a commercial for *Vožd //Duke//* perfume in which the words "the duke has arrived" were repeated for 2-3 seconds.

was the situation in early 80's when a new action plan of the Serbian elite was being created. That is why it does not surprise that little by little Bosnia and Herzegovina was becoming a problematic Republic in which scandals appeared one after the other, while the media picture of it was created in Belgrade.⁵⁷ The Belgrade media paid considerable attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina but the coverage was mostly such as to make this Republic resemble a mythological "kingdom of darkness". Almost nothing that took place in this Republic spoke of good and healthy relations in any domain of social life. This approach which talks about terrifying plans to attack Bosnia and Herzegovina, some authors, and especially at one point journalist of the Sarajevo Youth Radio, Neven Anđelić, called the waking up of the public opinion. The process of democratization and freeing of the media from the political embrace in the middle of 80's, according to Anđelić, could be followed through learning about the scandals involving Moševac, Agrokomerc, Neum⁵⁸, etc. To be sarcastic, maybe it was only possible to follow "Oslobođenje" (*Liberation*) of the media which put themselves in service of implementing the politics as defined by *SANU*. Also, Anđelić's argumentation that it is impossible to link Milošević with the "Agrokomerc scandal", since he carried out a coup on September 23, 1987, which actually happened after the scandal was discovered and after removal of Fikret Abdić from the Communist Party, is incorrect I think (Anđelić: 2005, 88-89). Also, Milošević's rise to power in Serbia did not happen at the plenary session, as Anđelić points out, since he had been there for some time already. The plenary session only confirmed that and put the people who ruled behind the scenes in the spotlight of the political stage. Sneakily and behind his back, Stambolić was defeated by his student and his favorite. The eighth session of the *CK SKS* was a farce and a show which ended before it started since that is the only way in which such events can take place (Stambolić: 1995, 221).

In the 80's, on the subject of manipulation by media, articles about Islamic fundamentalism started appearing in the Yugoslav press, especially in the magazines *NIN* and *Duga* from Belgrade. One of the causes for such writing was the unrest of Albanians in Kosovo in 1981 while the Sarajevo Trial⁵⁹ of 1983 just added more fuel to the fire for Muslim intellectuals. The fact that a much wider circle of people should have been accused and tried in the

⁵⁷ The "Moševac scandal" is a typical example of media manipulation. The alleged illegal usage of funds in the local community of Moševac, Maglaj Municipality, was used to prove corruption of the BiH Government.

⁵⁸ The "Neum scandal" followed the "Agrokomerc scandal". It was about the construction of villas for high public officials in this small BiH town on the Adriatic coast. The main accused, by media, was Branko Mikulić.

⁵⁹ This refers to the trial of Muslim intellectuals for fundamentalism and subversion of the system, with the first defendant being future president of BiH, Alija Izetbegović.

Sarajevo Trial has been confirmed many times. Somebody mentioned a list of over 100 intellectuals who were targeted, even party members, but were saved thanks to the efforts of Hamdija Pozderac. That list contained the names of Muslim intellectuals such as Muhamed Filipović, Muhsin Rizvić and even then the party favourite, Nijaz Duraković (Latić: 2003, 58-59).

Having arrived to Krajina in order to report on the scandal, a journalist of the Belgrade NIN, Petar Ignja, described Velika Kladuša as a "typical Bosnian small town in the centre of which is a mosque with the minaret, speakers and a flag of the green grass on it."⁶⁰ The anti-Muslim hysteria was already in full swing. That, on the other hand, homogenized Muslims who began turning to "themselves" because of the open humiliation "of the others". A local journalist, Tomislav Turkalj, fell in this trap of chasing the boogy man, and was trying to prove the Agrokomerc's ties with the Islamic world, ritual slaughtering of the chickens supervised by students from Iran, donating funds for building the mosque in Zagreb and some other similar "illegal activities".⁶¹ All this confirmed the fact that the Agrokomerc scandal began to be seen through the nationalistic glasses and explained in that way. An interview given by dr. Tanasković, islamologist, in the NIN's feuilleton about the invasion of the Islamic fundamentalism can also confirm this statement. Namely, as much as Tanasković gave scientific and founded qualifications in relation to Islam, the photos and questions of the journalists were pure propaganda and spreading of hatred.⁶² Soon enough, the character of legendary Mujo Hrnjica, sung hero from Krajina from the 17th century, whose monument was erected and soon after removed in Kladuša, became proof for the flourishing of the Muslim fundamentalism. A question was asked how it was possible that this "pickpocket" got a monument while 5000 Serb victims from the WW II, whose graves were still unknown, didn't have a monument in Kladuša.⁶³ Bringing in the victims was put to good use also in this example. In fact, the "Agrokomerc scandal" opened the door for humiliation and dehumanization of Muslims which lead to the events of 1992. (Cigar: 1994, 147-170).

The first step that was made and which indicated that the court proceeding is imminent was stripping Fikret Abdić of his parliamentary immunity by the Mandate – Immunity Com-

⁶⁰ NIN, August 30, 1987. (Fikret and his pals)

⁶¹ Krajina, October 2, 1987. (Chickens on Khomeini's table)

⁶² NIN, September 13, 1987. (Mujo Hrnjica and Islam)

⁶³ Večernje novosti Daily, September 13, 1987. (Hang on, wait you Mujo from Kladuša)

mission of the Assembly of Yugoslavia. That happened on September 8, 1987 with an explanation that: "The emission of unsecured bills of exchange caused far reaching consequences for the economy of *SFRJ*, jeopardizing its economic basis, by which a criminal act of a counter-revolutionary threat to the social system had been committed as referred to in Article 114 of the Criminal Code of *SFRJ*".⁶⁴ At around the same time, the actions of Fikret Abdić, but also of Hakija Pozderac, were condemned at the session of the Presidency of the Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of Bihać, suggesting the similar solution for the latter.⁶⁵ At its session of September 12, 1987, at which Hamdija gave his resignation, the Presidency of the Communist Party of BiH found Hakija Pozderac politically liable for the events surrounding *Agrokomerc*.⁶⁶

On February 29, 1988, the indictment was issued by the Superior Public Prosecutors Office in Bihać. With the trial on the way in Bihać (May 5, 1988), which began several months after detaining Fikret Abdić, Hakija Pozderac, Alija Alešević, Ibrahim Mujić and others, games started to be played around Bosnia and Herzegovina also.⁶⁷ Counter-revolutionary activities represented the basis for of the indictment.⁶⁸ In order to allegedly secure impartiality of the court, Rifat Konjić, judge from Tuzla, was brought. His testimony reveals how the trial proceeded and how one of the defendants, Alija Alešević, former manager of the Internal Bank of *Agrokomerc* and most familiar with the dealings related to the bills of exchange, saw it:

"I was released on remand after 18 months and then I went to the trial. Then there was approximately third stage of the trial. In this third stage, Hakija had to be moved out of the courtroom and he was released because of illness. I became the second accused, while Pirija⁶⁹ came to *Agrokomerc* and called me to work in *Agrokomerc*. I accepted it and started to work. Then the Government of the Republic gave budget money for 30 experts in *Agrokomerc*. I also received the salary from he budget, whereas I was tried for counter-revolution etc. My task was to revitalize *Agrokomerc*, whereas I was charged with destabilization of the State. That guy told me (meaning the Court President, Rifat Konjić) to get some sleep but I told him I couldn't

⁶⁴ Krajina, September 11, 1987. (Bill of exchange magician also detained)

⁶⁵ Krajina, September 11, 1987. (Communists don't beat around the bush)

⁶⁶ Krajina, September 18, 1987. (Hakija Pozderac is guilty)

⁶⁷ Krajina, May 6, 1988. (Allocated illegally)

⁶⁸ Krajina, May 6, 1988. (First four hours)

⁶⁹ Osman Pirija, economist who was manager of the Mostar firm HEPOK and who came to *Agrokomerc* to consolidate the situation.

because I was working at night in Agrokomerc. When I told to the Court President that I worked in Agrokomerc and that I was paid from the state budget, he told me to bring him relevant decision and that he would kiss my forehead if this was true. What was the point? The point was to weaken me physically for the trial, to remove Hakija, but he is wise and they wouldn't fool him, while Fikret let Zagreb lawyers go and hired Belgrade lawyers."

This is the third stage. Now, when I reflect to this, it was all preparation for this war. In this third stage the task of Fikret was to... Milošević issued an order and forgave debt to Agrokomerc. The money market reacted, because 80% of the debt was forgiven. Death penalty for Fikret was reversed and then the counter-revolution charges were dropped. This was Milošević's move. Milošević was the bank director. I was in the bank with him just like now with you. Even then, in my opinion, Fikret begins to work solely upon the orders from Belgrade. His task was to compromise the politicians in Bosnia and particular emphasis was given to Serbs. He interfered in it; he took Croats, Muslims, such as Raif Dizdarević, for instance. But, the point was to generate hatred among people against politicians who were from the Serb nation; that was his task."⁷⁰

This long quotation, which contains certain vagueness, offers several important indications. Release of Hakija Pozderac, dropping charges pursuant to Article 114 of the Criminal Code of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and taking over Abdić's defence by the team of Belgrade lawyers happened almost like in the movie. Indeed, the most intriguing thing is that the Yugoslav Money Market (JTN) actually forgave the debt to Agrokomerc although two years before that the JTN first wanted to convert the debt into extremely unfavourable, loan-sharking credit and then it was given up because the only solution was, as I stated, the court and conducting procedure against Abdić, Hakija Pozderac et al. One can only guess how and why this shift happened, at least until one of then leaders of the JTN begins to talk about this problem. But, it is important that it happened and that the "Agrokomerc scandal" was brought to an end. Alešević puts Slobodan Milošević into very interesting position, i.e., considers his role as central in the decision about the case and thereby setting Fikret Abdić free.⁷¹ Another type of arguments about the third stage of the trial, as Alešević called it,

⁷⁰ Interview with Alija Alešević, 9.11.2006

⁷¹ Since some very interesting information related to this collaboration go beyond the time limit included in this article, I will give several opinions in the conclusion, which corroborate the thesis on involvement of Slobodan Milošević in the whole case not only politically, but also financially,.

was offered by the General Martin Špegelj. In his opinion, the top leaders of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) was behind instigating a scandal. When Hamdija Pozderac was finally removed from power, Fikret Abdić was released, and the top of the Army immediately established close contacts with him (Špegelj: 2001, 97). This view was presented by a man who knew the situation in the JNA well as well as its methods, so his opinion should be considered as quite credible. Having in mind hitherto Abdić's collaboration with the top of the Army, one should not be surprised at all about his adherence to the new concept in which he received his "shire". Yet, the death of Hamdija Pozderac did not bring an end to this scandal because the trial began a month after his death, but it opened the opportunities not to go to the very end and therefore it facilitated the concept of Great Serbia to carry on with planned activities in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This thesis on the concept of Great Serbia and its interest in the "Agrokomerc scandal", which was generally accepted but not so much supported by the documents, was offered by a series of significant authors. Regardless whether they emphasized the top of the JNA as those who recruited Abdić or they emphasized Milošević's political clique, Abdić worked for the same goals just like these, at first sight two but actually one military-political group. The same as the General Nikola Ljubičić was behind Milošević's rise to power, he surely was involved in attracting Fikret Abdić for the ideas of Great Serbia. Taking into account the fact that Ljubičić, to all appearances, initiated destabilization of Agrokomerc and turned it in from the hands of the Army to the police for the purpose of removing Hamdija Pozderac from power. Thereby he, and the Army itself were involved in the whole story up to their ears.⁷² This view is corroborated by the following quotation taken from Nihad Krupić, who was conducting certain researches on the role of the JNA in Abdić's behavior at the time of the scandal, before and after the democratic elections in 1990, but also during the war (1992-1995) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He states:

"Then Yugoslav intelligence service contacted Fikret Abdić at the time when he was interrogated and imprisoned in Bihać prison. The following persons took part in the operational action '*Proboj 1*' (Breakthrough 1), i.e., recruiting Abdić to serve the Serbian Counter-intelligence Service (KOS), and upon the order of Aleksandar Vasiljević: Major Čedo

⁷² Dnevni avaz, 5.11.1997 (The Life and Death of Hamdija Pozderac 24)

Knežević, Lieutenant-Colonel Smiljanić, Captain Miroslav Balan, and Vukašin Gledić. After being released from prison, Fikret Abdić agreed to work for KOS in the restaurant „Lovačka kuća“ (Hunter's House) in Bihać.⁷³ I could not refrain from quoting this indication of the author, although he has not offered sources for this information in his text.⁷⁴

Maybe the most illustrative and the most original explanation of this scandal was given by Alija Alešević:

"Look, Milošević wisely achieved 3-4 things by the Agrokomerc scandal. Number one, Hamdija⁷⁵, being a chairman of the Constitutional-Legal Commission, was on his way as a person who would not allow constitutional changes including what happened later with the provinces. Hamdija wouldn't allow it. The first step was greater Serbia, i.e., Serbia without provinces. The second step was to make space for these radicals in Bosnia, meaning that some other people should be removed. And Fikret served to that purpose. I only do not understand why he never realized that this was final blow against Bosniaks. I can understand that one loves Agrokomerc, but when shells fall and civilians are killed... People do not matter to him.

The third thing – and the most dangerous one – that he wanted to achieve was to make the State to act against itself. The Bihać Bank, as a regional bank, was liquidated, meaning that suddenly thousands of private accounts and firms...Others fall beside Agrokomerc, do you follow me?! Simply, when someone imposes social issues to the people, when people don't know what they will eat the next day, then they start to bow their heads to a tank when it comes by. If the people have food and if they have money to buy a rifle, they will not move out of the way when a tank comes. I believe that his idea was to soften Krajina."⁷⁶

The first multiparty elections and Fikret Abdić

The position of Fikret Abdić in the process of the democratization of society and the first post-war multiparty elections in Yugoslavia was extremely interesting and significant. Because of renewal of multiparty system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were a lot of par-

⁷³ Krupić, N. 2005, The Greatest Serb Pranks, www.bosnjaci.net (25.6.2007)

⁷⁴ I e-mailed the author who at first told me that he would send me his phone number as soon as he would come to BiH (he does not live here anymore) so that we could exchange views and information. Unfortunately, he did not do it. He never replied to my second e-mail.

⁷⁵ He means on Hamdija Pozderac

⁷⁶ Interview with Alija Alešević, 9.11.2006

ties that emerged and wanted Abdić's support so there were many delegations visiting Velika Kladuša in 1990 to win him for their political option. His reputation that he had been building until the "Agrokomerc scandal" became even bigger after he was released in October 1989, and his influence became more serious and stronger. After a lot of delay and haggling, he decided to join the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) which gathered Bosnian Muslims and was led by Alija Izetbegović, future president of the BiH Presidency and sacrosanct leader of the BiH Muslims.

After being detained in the fall of 1987, Abdić was described as a local despot, swindler and intriguer. The climax was charge with counter-revolution, which represented absolute negative image of a person in socialist countries. However, one needs to have in mind that these charges were brought at the time when the Yugoslav socialism was losing its breath and support of the people, so Abdić was not rejected *a priori*. On the contrary, the population of Bihać Krajina, especially of Velika Kladuša and Cazin still trusted him and believed in his innocence. It may be said that, actually, Abdić was at that time the central point around whom the Krajina population homogenized. There are countless facts that prove it. There are countless facts that show how the cult of the leader was built and well accepted by the local population, probably because of the matrix that was almost a genetic code here. I mean "*our righteous man*" who is "*alone against all*", "*who was not understood*", "*betrayed by own and foreign people*", and so forth.

After the scandal started and after poor trial in Bihać that was carefully observed in Bihać Krajina (actually it was carefully observed in the whole state, and very intensively in Krajina), the magician from Velika Kladuša resurfaced as the only person who could change the bad situation in the region that was result of the scandal. Even the reputable economists began to talk about him in 1989 as the only savior and that this opinion was shared by the workers of Agrokomerc and the population of Cazin area⁷⁷ (Krajina, 17.2.1989). Shortly after, when it became more certain in mid-1989 that those accused in the scandal could be released, Abdić was acquiring messianic aura owing to his followers. His follower and a journalist of weekly magazine, Hans Ržehak, wrote: "It seems that Abdić zealously prepared some solutions in the prison." (Krajina, 27.10.1989) As naive as it sounds, people believed that this was

⁷⁷ Cazin area encompasses the municipalities Cazin and Velika Kladuša. It matches with the area where Agrokomerc had its plants and well-developed cooperation with the local population.

true and that Abdić, beside working on his defence and all details of trial, was zealously finding solutions for economic problems that befell Krajina. He should have only get out of the prison and the progress would have been visible immediately.

The indicator that the release from detention and return to Velika Kladuša had the characteristic of a return of a saviour was the procedure on 26 October 1989, the day when the man number one from Krajina left Bihać prison. A crowd of people waited for Abdić's release in front of the prison and then the long line of cars went toward Velika Kladuša, which is around 60 km away. On the way, the people, obviously satisfied and happy, welcomed and waved both to the cars and the free man. Upon arrival to Kladuša, Abdić first reported to work [*sic*], visited factory plants and then held press conference in his brother's house (his brother died some time earlier), probably partly exhausted because of all happenings around the scandal and trial in Bihać. To make the situation more accentuated, stronger and more emotional, the red carpet was rolled out for Abdić before he went out of the car and walked on Kladuša ground. The welcome was at such level which only Tito had had at the time of his rule over Yugoslavia. Therefrom one can see the significance of events/persons in history and their impact on historical processes. Few people in this small town could have further thoughts about Abdić as an ordinary person, but not only here. He was becoming a charismatic person throughout the country and somebody who is removing all obstacles on his path. He received such sympathies in Muslim population that very few Muslim socialist leaders had.

The beginning of pre-election campaign of the SDA was in Velika Kladuša (Krajina, 21.9.1990). In the area which accommodated around 200,000 people from all over BiH⁷⁸, a huge stage was set and decorated with folklore motives, including the statue of Mujo Hrnjica as a central figure of that Bosnian-Muslim mosaic. That symbolic level of showing unity of Muslims, where a horse mounted hero from Krajina gathers and connects fragments around himself, also happened at the practical level. The central figure that delivered speech and addressed to the gathered crowd was Fikret Abdić, although he gave speech after the party president Izetbegović. Abdić got huge ovations and undivided sympathies (Brka, 2007, 170). Several days before this event held on 15 September 1990, it was allegedly not clear for

⁷⁸ There were several buses that arrived from Sandžak (which is not part of BiH, but there is historical and strong connection between this region, which is divided between Serbia and Montenegro, and BiH). Novi Pazar Sandžak was integral part of Bosnian Province for several centuries. Even today, the majority of the population in Sandžak are Bosniaks.

which political option Abdić would opt, and so he actually then made public his joining the SDA.⁷⁹

After this event, Abdić's party activity was not so significant. He used to appear unannounced at party meeting, convention or press conference and then provide his opinion on certain issue (Krajina: 12.10.1990). Of course, he participated at the events organized in Krajina municipalities along with other SDA leaders (Krajina: 26.10.1990). After the event in Kladuša, there was a discord in the SDA, when dissatisfied political dissident who had lived in Switzerland for a long time, Adil Zulfikarpašić, and the professor of the Sarajevo University, Muhamed Filipović, left the party and established the MBO (Muslim-Bosniak Organization). Negotiations on reconciliation and putting the new party under the authority of the SDA, that were conducted in Tešanj on 23 September 1990, five days after establishment of the MBO and eight days after the event in Kladuša, did not help return of outlaws (Brka: 2007, 175). This was a conflict between Muslims and Bosniaks that originated because, as it was officially told, economic megalomania and unfounded promises given by the SDA leaders, especially Fikret Abdić (Krajina: 26.10.1990). Another not less important reason, and I would say even more important, is an opinion of the MBO leaders that the SDA went to right-wing direction and to the religious fanaticism and fundamentalism (Brka: 2007, 177). However, regardless of the reasons in question, this political turmoil opened a lot of issues, some of them essential (the name of a nation) when it comes to nation building. The Kladuša event was described by a founding member of the SDA, Osman Brka, as a watershed and the event that established political relations which would remain unchanged long after (Brka: 2007, 177). However, Brka was right about one thing: the SDA was and has remained the most important political party of Bosniaks, while pluralization processes have still been going on. It was done in Bihać Krajina at the most scrupulous level, mostly owing to the political activity of Fikret Abdić.

Conclusion

The time of changes is woven of quick and strong events that are the main factors and carriers of new meanings. Such was the period from 1987 to 1990 in Yugoslavia/BiH. There

⁷⁹ This details also speaks about building a myth of a person. It would be logical to ask the following: if it was not known until the last minute whether Abdić would become an SDA member, why Kladuša was chosen as a starting point for pre-election campaign, i.e. the place that could "breathe" upon Abdić approval.

were several important processes that went on in Yugoslavia and affected each other. At that time, among other processes in BiH, there was national homogenization of three constituents of Bosnian state. Beside homogenization of Muslims/Bosniaks which, I believe, happened naturally on the grounds of religion, there was a series of reversals which were breaking the process of nationalizing culture, tradition and history, and which were leading united political action to blind alley.

It was very much noticeable in Bihać Krajina through the political contribution to the homogenization, and in the post-1992 period to the fragmentation of the Bosniak nation. In both cases the regional identity, i.e., its experience and presentation, had decisive impact. From the position wherein the social grouping of Krajina society was determined by the space where "the voices could be heard and voices of the ancestors remembered" (Roško, 2003, 260.), this society went to the position of the factor integrating the broader community. Thereby is actually confirmed the view that a regionalism can act both in the process of separating layers of collectivity and in its integration, i.e., keeping the national project alive and vital (Lofgren, 1989, 18).

Following the development of Agrokomerc it is visible to detect ways in which supra-national Yugoslav identity moved among Krajišniks. Leaving traditional society Bosnian muslims (Bosniaks), under influence of modernization, took yugoslavism as a something natural (Spehnjak – Cipek: 2007, 283). Industrialization and urbanization gave them possibility to participate with others on same level. Among Krajišniks it was spread vigorously. Reasons were very simple. Yugoslav socialist system, according to leadership, "starts to show its supremacy" and they tried to emphasize it through every action they made. It has reflections, especially among societies which were in transition from traditional to modern, such society of Bihaćka krajina was. Success of some domestic factory directly helped to socialism and yugoslavism. Success of Agrokomerc was so huge that it gave to yugoslav ideology a lots of credit. It was, in psychology of ordinary people, only way Yugoslavia (and they with their homeland) can go. That's why among Bosniaks were a big number of those who came out as Yugoslavs (Spehnjak – Cipek: 2007, 283). Material culture, therefore, influenced on collective psychology to accept new cultural forms as own.

"Agrokomerc Affair" in 1987. opens the door for different thinking. It helped new beginning of forgotten antagonism between periphery and centre. Regionalism was, once again,

prime collective identification, with almost the same essence it has in history (rejection, negligence, conspiracy etc). Thus, democratization which started in second half of eighties dealt with “Agrokomerc Affair” in many ways. From economic and legal fields this case was brought to cultural and national (not without reason) and became one of the top issues. Changed perspective of Krajišniks was strongly emphasized on SDA pre-election rally in 1990. Rejected history and heroes (from Othoman rule) came back; regional identity was connected to Islam, Bosnian muslims and new/old values; Yugoslavism represented fake and forced identification.

However, neither of those processes in Biháčka krajina never ended or died. Regional, national and supranational identity flows inside contemporary society like it flowed 15 or 20 years ago. War between Bosniaks in Biháčka krajina during war in BiH (1992 – 1995) had significance for identity comprehension and it was, partly, war for identity. Director of Agrokomerc and Serbian politics, again, had main roles in it.

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