

Pismo Saveznom sekretarijatu za narodnu obranu

Zagreb, 1. kolovoza 1991.

Potkraj srpnja 1991. Jugoslavenska narodna armija, tada još nominalno federalna vojska na području bivše Jugoslavije, napala je teškim minobacačima i artiljerijom hrvatske gradove u istočnoj Slavoniji, Erdut 21. i 25., te Ilok 26. srpnja. Otvorena agresija na hrvatski povijesni teritorij na čelu s tzv. JNA, kojoj su prethodili brojni teroristički napadi Srba i četnika od Knina, Plitvica i Pakraca do Dalja i Borova Sela, time je otpočela. U prvim artiljerijskim napadima na Erdut i Ilok stradali su spomenici najviše kategorije. Odmah na početku agresije bilo je više nego očigledno da do razaranja spomenika nije došlo samo uslijed nekontroliranog borbenog djelovanja, dakle slučajno, već su ti objekti pomno odabirani. Kao materijalna svjedočanstva vjekovne opstojnosti Hrvata na ovim povijesnim prostorima spomenici i gradovi-spomenici bili su bez svake sumnje najugroženiji ciljevi neprijateljskih razaranja. Ta se spoznaja ubrzo potvrdila na stotinama daljnjih primjera još strašnijeg vandalizma.

Suočavanje s nesagledivim posljedicama rata, koje nam je zaprijetilo pravim kulturocidom i uništenjem, sililo nas je na djelovanje. U proširenu sastavu Znanstvenog vijeća Instituta odmah smo uputili pismo prosvjeda glavnom počinitelju ratnih šteta, Saveznom sekretarijatu za narodnu obranu, o čemu smo informirali međunarodne forume.

Letter to the Federal Secretariate for National Defence

Zagreb, 1 August 1991.

At the end of July 1991 the Yugoslav National Army, until then nominally a Federal army on the territory of what had been Yugoslavia, began to attack Croatian towns in Eastern Slavonia with heavy mortars and artillery - Erdut on 21 and 25 and Ilok on 25 July. Thus there began a blatant attack on historical Croatian territory, led by the so-called YNA, which had been preceded by numerous terrorist attacks by Serbs and Chetniks from Knin, Plitvice and Pakrac to Dalj and Borovo Selo. In the first artillery assaults on Erdut and Ilok monuments of the highest category suffered damage. From the very start of the aggression it was more than obvious that the destruction of these monuments did not come about merely as a result of unbridled military action, i.e. by chance, but that the targets had been deliberately chosen. As material evidence of the existence of Croats on these historical territories over many centuries, these towns and cultural monuments were beyond any doubt the targets most threatened by the enemy's destructive action. This fact was rapidly confirmed by hundreds of other cases of even more outrageous vandalism.

Faced with the incalculable consequences of a war that threatened to annihilate and totally destroy our culture, we were forced to act. Within the broader context of the Institute's Academic Committee, we at once despatched a letter of protest to the principal perpetrator of this war damage, the Federal Secretariate for National Defence, at the same time informing international bodies of our action.



Ilok, gradske zidine i Crkva sv. Ivana Kapistrana, prije rata (foto: Institut za povijest umjetnosti)

Ilok, ramparts and the Church of St. John of Capistrano before the war (photo: Institute of history of art)

Zašto ste gađali spomenike?

Saveznom sekretaru za narodnu obranu
Kneza Miloša 29
11000 Beograd

Zagreb, 1. kolovoza 1991.

Kao ustanova kojoj su svjedočanstva prošlosti predmet istraživanja, tražimo da nama i cjelokupnoj javnosti obrazložite kako je moglo doći do gađanja razornim projektilima nekoliko najznačajnijih spomenika kulturne baštine u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj. Pritom osobito mislimo na napade izvršene na erdutsku utvrdu, pravoslavnu crkvu u Erdutu i franjevački samostan u Iloku.

Ne možemo razumjeti kako vojska u vlastitoj zemlji može pucati na spomenike registrirane i klasificirane najvišom kategorijom zaštite. Zato od Vas kao najodgovornije osobe tražimo razjašnjenje.

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- Ministarstvu prosvjete i kulture Republike Hrvatske
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- UNESCO-u, Pariz
- ICOMOS-u, Pariz

Why did you fire on cultural monuments?

*To The Federal National Defence Secretary
Kneza Miloša 29
11000 Beograd*

Zagreb, 1st August 1991

As an institution which deals with research into evidence from the past, we ask you to explain to us and the general public how it could come about that several of the most significant monuments of our cultural heritage in inland Croatia were fired at with destructive missiles. In particular, we are referring to the attacks which were launched on the Erdut fortress, the Serbian Orthodox church in Erdut and the Franciscan monastery in Ilok.

We cannot understand how an army, in its own country, can fire at monuments which have been registered and classified in the highest category of protection. We ask you, therefore, as the person most responsible, to give us an explanation.

*Research council
of the Institute of Historical
Studies of Zagreb University*

Copies to:

- the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Croatia*
- The Ministry of Science, Technology and Informatics of the Republic of Croatia*
- The University of Zagreb*
- UNESCO, Paris*
- ICOMOS, Paris*

Iz odgovora Saveznog sekretarijata za narodnu obranu

Beograd, 20. kolovoza 1991.

...U svim naseljenim mestima koja kontrolišu oružane formacije Republike Hrvatske a nalaze se u kriznim područjima, ne samo da su crkveni tornjevi pretvoreni u osmatračnice, mitraljeska i snajperska gnezda, a crkve u skladišta municije, eksploziva i vojne opreme, nego se odatle intenzivno otvarala vatra na pripadnike Jugoslovenske narodne armije. Isto važi i za objekat - erdutske tvrđave koji je zbog svog položaja pretvoren u vojno uporište...

Prema tome, jedini razlog zbog koga su jedinice Jugoslovenske narodne armije bile prinuđene da dejstvuju na erdutsku tvrđavu i druga dva objekta koje spominjete u vašem pismu je taj što su oružane formacije Republike Hrvatske te kulturno-istorijske spomenike pretvorile u vojna uporišta i odatle dejstvovale na pripadnike Jugoslovenske narodne armije...

Najiskrenije se nadamo da vaše obraćanje Saveznom sekretarijatu za narodnu odbranu nije deo već ustaljenog scenarija po kome se izvrtanjem činjenica istina ostavlja po strani a upotrebljava ona njena verzija koja je u funkciji dnevno-političkih interesa čiji je cilj da se Jugoslovenska narodna armija pred domaćom i svetskom javnošću prikaže kao okupator u vlastitoj zemlji...

Kao što se bezbroj puta pokazalo, agresor je za svaki svoj "zločin" unaprijed imao spreman odgovor. I ovom prilikom uobičajeno providan i proturječan. Za svoje "štetočine" nad spomenicima okrivio je hrvatsku vojsku. Ona je odgovorna što su spomenici izgubili imunitet, kaže se u pismu, bez ijednog potkrijepljenog dokaza. Obrazlažući kako su morali pucati u crkve i spomenike jer su ih snage MUP-a navodno pretvorile u vojna uporišta, nisu se uopće pritom zapitali - može li se armija, koja tako izričito izjavljuje da ratuje protiv legalnih jedinica Republike Hrvatske u toj istoj Republici Hrvatskoj, smatrati njezinom "narodnom" armijom? Međutim, međunarodna javnost, kojoj smo se istodobno obratili, nije još u tom trenutku mogla sagledati tako očiglednu proturječnost. Jer svijet je tada još nejasno zaključivao da se negdje u Jugoslaviji, ne pojmeći da je riječ samo o Hrvatskoj, vodi građanski ili etnički sukob, a federalna vojska u tom sukobu uvodi red. Da ne bi kojim slučajem još nekome postalo jasno ono što je "ovlašteni" potpisnik odgovora pukovnik Gvero dobro znao - da je njihova vojska u Hrvatskoj okupator - na kraju nam se, kojeg li cinizma, insinuirala igra oko "scenarija" laži. Ubojiti učinak izvrtanja činjenica bio im je iz bogate vlastite upotrebe više nego dobro poznat.

From the reply of the Federal Secretariate for National Defence

Beograd, 20th August 1991.

...In all the inhabited places controlled by the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia in the war zones not only have church spires been turned into observation posts and hiding places for snipers and soldiers with machine-guns, and the churches into storehouses for ammunition, explosives and military equipment, but intense fire has been opened from churches on members of the Yugoslav People's Army. The same holds for the Erdut Fortress, which was, owing to its position, turned into a military stronghold...

Therefore, the only reason why troops of the Yugoslav People's Army were forced to open fire on the Erdut Fortress and the other two buildings mentioned in your letter was that the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia had turned these cultural and historical monuments into military strongholds from which they opened fire on members of the Yugoslav People's Army...

We sincerely hope that your letter to the Federal Secretariat for National Defence is not part of the established scenario whereby facts are twisted, the truth ignored, and a version of it used which serves the interests of everyday politics, the aim being to represent the Yugoslav People's Army to the public at home and abroad as an occupying force in its own country...

As has been demonstrated on innumerable occasions, the aggressor has a ready answer prepared in advance to justify each of his crimes. On this occasion, too, it was as usual, transparent and inconsistent. He blamed the Croatian forces for the damage inflicted on these monuments. They were to blame for the buildings forfeiting their immunity, the letter states, without the least substantive proof. Explaining how they were obliged to open fire on churches and other protected buildings because the forces of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior had allegedly turned them into military strong-points, it apparently never occurred to them to ask themselves whether an army which thus expressly states that it is waging war against legitimate military units of the Republic of Croatia is in a position to regard itself in that same Republic of Croatia as the latter's "national" army. However, the international public to whom we turned at the same time was unable at that stage to observe a glaring contradiction of that kind. For the world had come to the vague conclusion at that time that there was some kind of civil or ethnic conflict going on in Yugoslavia, unaware that only Croatia was involved, and that the Federal Army was restoring order in the midst of this conflict. In order that no-one should on any account realise something which the "authorised" signatory of the reply, Colonel Gvero, very well knew - namely, that his army in Croatia was an army of occupation - the letter concludes with an insinuation - what cynicism! - that the allegations are in fact a "scenario" of falsehoods. Murderous perversion of the facts is something of which these people have a wealth of experience from their own practice.