

INDEPENDENT CROATIA ON THE WAY TO CONSOLIDATION

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Besides the work of securing and strengthening the country's position in international politics and developing the bases of its economic life, of which we published a short account in our June and July issues, the greatest task with which the Croat Administration is confronted is the organization of internal order and modern government.

In dividing the area of the new State into administrative units, the Croat Government has adhered to the county system, *dividing the country into 23 counties*. In the area of former Croatia-Slavonia, which until 29th October 1918 belonged as a sister-country to the Holy Crown of Hungary, only two counties, Belovár-Kőrös and Varažd, have been left, but new names have been given to them. The new name of Belovar-Kőrös (capital Bjelovar) is Bile-Gora, that of Varažd (capital *Varažd*) Zagorje. County Szerém (Szem) is now called *Vuka*, and its capital is *Vukovar*. In this county the Serbs are in the majority, so the centre of administration has been transferred to a Croat district. County *Verőce* has now become County *Baranya*, with *Eszék* (Osijek) as its capital town. During the reigns of the Árpád and Angevin kings the Hungarian county of Baranya stretched down across the Drave as far as County *Požega*, with County *Verőce* on its western flank. At that time Counties *Verőce*, Szerém and *Požega* were integral parts of Hungary, and it was only after the compromise between Hungary and Croatia in 1868 that they became part of Croatia-Slavonia. After this voluntary and generous cession on the part of Hungary, 90% of the area of the Hungarian county of *Baranya* still remained on the northern side of the river Drave, with Pécs as its capital. County *Verőce*, on the other hand, always lay between the Drave and the Save, so that its change of name is not justified either by historical or by

geographical considerations. To County *Požega* have been added the adjacent lands beyond the Save, and this enlarged county now bears the name of *Livac-Zapolje*. With this the last traces contained in the old names of the three counties, *Szerém*, *Verőce* and *Požega*, that they were once part of Hungary and were a Hungarian settlement area until the end of the Middle Ages, have been obliterated. Along with the change of names certain territorial changes have also been made in all the counties.

In 1931 the total number of inhabitants in the area of Independent Croatia was 5,544.840 souls. In 1941, a decade later, it had increased by 1,130.396 to 6,675.236. The distribution of the population in the various counties is as follows:

County	Capital	1931	1941
I. Baranya	Osijek	327.831	358.133
II. Bilo-Gora	Bjelovar	333.952	345.130
III. Bribir-Sid	Knin	87.352	112.914
IV. Cetina	Omis	212.690	248.884
V. Dubrava	Dubrovnik	161.355	190.473
VI. Goža	Petrinja	215.900	247.003
VII. Hum	Mostar	209.399	262.664
VIII. Krabava-Psat	Bihać	166.195	215.732
IX. Lašva-Glaz	Travnik	192.680	250.098
X. Lika-Gačka	Goszpić	155.059	185.919
XI. Livac-Zapolje	Nova-Gradiška	374.219	441.097
XII. Modrus	Ogulin	129.778	155.493
XIII. Pliva-Rama	Bugojno	214.526	289.304
XIV. Pokupje	Karlovac	196.755	225.200
XV. Posavlje	Brod	409.902	498.838
XVI. Prigorje	Zagreb	251.211	278.936
XVII. Sana-Luka	Banja-Luka	265.222	348.182
XVIII. Usara-Soli	Tuzla	288.686	370.317
XIX. V. Podgorje	Senj	68.252	78.307
XX. Vrnbosna	Sarajevo	358.521	440.310
XXI. Vuka	Vukovar	416.991	445.547
XXII. Zagorje	Varažd	322.783	493.646
XXIII. Glavni Grad	Zagreb	185.581	192.319
		5,544.840	6,675.236

For more than 800 years the district between the Mura and the Drave (Medjumurje) had always belonged to Hungary, and it was only in the period of Absolutism following the Hungarian War of Independence, and later on in 1918, when after the collapse of the Monarchy it came under Yugoslav rule, that for the time being it was attached to Croatia-Slavonia. Despite the fact that after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Hungary, by virtue of her imprescriptible historical right to it, reincorporated it in the Kingdom of Hungary, the Croat now lay claim to that region, and on paper and in theory have attached it to County Zagorje (previously County Varažd), adding its population of about 100.000 souls to that of the newly named county. If we rectify this arbitrary addition, we shall find that in 1941 the population of County Zagorje was not 493.646, as stated above, but only 393.646.

The new administrative division of the country was accomplished with comparative ease, but the pacification of its several parts caused, and is still causing, much worry. The reason is there are over 1,600.000 Serbs living in Independent Croatia, who find it difficult or impossible to acquiesce in the new state of affairs. The conflict between Serbs and Croats is more bitter today than it ever was before. *When they were in the saddle, especially at the time of the Pashitch-Pribichevich Government and during the Dictatorship, the Serbs behaved ruthlessly towards their sister-nation, the Croats.* The dissatisfaction now felt by the Serbs led to the outbreak of a bloody rebellion. Finally the Croats were forced, in order to quell it, to apply for the help of German and Italian troops, thanks to whom *they managed to clear a considerable part of the country of the rebels, a large number of whom — according to Zagreb reports — have laid down their arms and surrendered to the Croat Government.* This achievement does not, however, mean that the rebellion has been totally suppressed. Fighting is still going on in some parts of the country, where the bloodshed and havoc caused by the rebels keeps the Croat population in a state of terror. To mention only one case among many, on 19th June a band of Communists and Chetniks 200 strong and containing about 70 armed women, attacked at dead of night a nursing-home at Kamenica on the right bank of the Danube near Újvidék and plundered

it. They carried away all the medicine and bandages, the stocks of food and stores of bed-linen, and carrying their rich booty on carts stolen from neighbouring farms and vineyards, retired to the forest at Fruska Gora in the adjacent mountains. The audacious rebels worked so quietly that the 18 gendarmes and 30 members of the Ustaša stationed less than 200 paces distant from the nursinghome heard nothing of what happened. („Reggeli Újság“ June 21). How big some of the battles against the rebels were, may be gathered from a report published by the „Croatia,, news agency. According to it, a report from the headquarters of the Croat Ustaša dated June 5th states that in the battle fought at Bilece 2100, in those fought near Sarajevo, Han Pijesak and Višegrad 3000 and in the fighting in Hercegovina 1500 Chetniks and Communists were killed.

Besides armed force, the Croat Government is also employing other means to quell the risings that still continue to break out. Very many Serbs have been ordered to leave Croatia with their families or have been removed *en masse* to other parts of the country where they are less of a menace to public order, the safety of life and property. According to semi-official reports, *about 200.000 Croats have been settled in the places left vacant by their removal. These Croats, as reliable members of the Ustaša organization, may always be counted on to support the Government in every way.* The only question is whether the draconian measures forced upon the Croat Government in its extremity will not embitter relations between the Serbs and Croats to such an extent as to make any reconciliation and good neighbourly relations impossible even in the far-distant future. (“Harvatski Narod”, „Reggeli Újság“ and „Délvidéki Magyarság“, June and July issues.)