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The Origins of Peter W. Galbraith's Mission to the Balkans

Abstract

One of the biggest challenges for the international community at the beginning of 1990s became the issue of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Peter Galbraith's appointment as the US ambassador to Croatia in 1993 came at a critical juncture in the Balkan conflicts. Prior to his ambassadorship, Galbraith was an advisor to the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He visited the countries of the former Yugoslavia several times as an expert in the early 1990s. Ambassador Galbraith played a crucial role in addressing the Balkan conflicts. As the first US ambassador to Croatia, he actively supported the country's territorial integrity after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Galbraith's diplomacy was instrumental in fostering U.S. pressure that ended the Croat-Muslim conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, laying the groundwork for the Washington Agreement of 1994. This agreement, seen as a diplomatic success, paved the way for the Dayton Agreement in 1995.

Keywords: war in Yugoslavia, Balkans, Croatia, US diplomacy, Peter Galbraith

The turn of the 1980s and 1990s marked a turning point for Europe and the world: the end of the Cold War rivalry between the USSR and the United States, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the bloc of socialist states subordinated to Moscow, the reunification of Germany, and Western states seeking integration into the European Economic Community (EEC). At the same time, it must be remembered, as Renéo Lukic noted, that the end of the Cold War "signified a profound alteration of the balance of power in East-West relations, to the West's advantage. The dissolution of the bipolar international system in Europe was the most important event in international politics, opening the way for the creation of new states in East-Central Europe. This new wave touched the Balkans first"¹. In the south of the Old Continent, the process of disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was underway. The disintegration of this multinational

¹ R. Lukic, *The emergence of the nation-state in East-Central Europe and the Balkans in historical perspective*, in: *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*, ed. by S.P. Ramet, Cambridge 2010, pp. 54–55.



state and the armed conflicts on the ruins of the federation of southern Slavs would be a challenge for several years for the international community trying to stop the bloodshed in this part of Europe. This article will outline the steps taken by US diplomats during the initial period of the disintegration of the SFRY, particularly by Peter Woodard Galbraith. What was US policy towards the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina? Was the first American ambassador in Zagreb prepared for his mission? What role did he play in the process of diplomatic efforts to stop the wars in the Balkans? How did the Americans want to bring about a change in the situation on the fronts, without having to use their armed forces? And was Croatia an important player in this diplomatic showdown involving Ambassador Galbraith? It is worth examining these research questions from the historical perspective of almost three decades of the events described.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the United States – as Richard N. Haass rightly observed – “emerged from the Cold War as the world’s most powerful state”², and President George Herbert Walker Bush spoke of a “new world order”. However, the foreign policy priorities of the authorities in Washington in the early 1990s became, for example, involvement in the Middle East, the process of German reunification and the observation of events in the disintegrating Soviet Union (and later Russia). This is why US politicians, among others, were willing to put the issue of resolving the Yugoslav crisis in the hands of the EEC. European states were more strongly linked to the SFRY, e.g. through economic issues³. However, despite various initiatives on the part of the European partners and the USA and repeated calls for the maintenance of a unified and united Yugoslavia, on 25 June 1991 Slovenia and Croatia declared independence⁴, which became a symbolic “crossing of the Rubicon”.

On 27 June 1991, Yugoslav army units began combat operations against the Slovenians. The war in the SFRY and the break-up of the state became a reality... Its first stage was the so-called Ten-Day War in Slovenia⁵. However, thanks to the mediation of the EEC negotiators, the armed conflict in the republic was quickly brought to an end. This seemed to be a success for European diplomacy. Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van dem Broek stated: “We have the feeling that we have prevented a great volcanic eruption”⁶.

However, fighting soon broke out in Croatia as well, quickly escalating into open warfare. The Croats found themselves in a worse position than the Slovenes. Part of their republic’s territory had already been partly controlled since 1990 by well-armed Croatian Serbs, supported by the federal army and paramilitary units⁷. They were able to quickly control those areas of Croatia that they wanted to control, using military superiority. For

² R.N. Haass, *The Reluctant Sheriff. The United States after the Cold War*, New York 1997, p. 28.

³ A. Orzelska, *Wpływ konfliktu w byłej Jugosławii na stosunki między Stanami Zjednoczonymi a Unią Europejską 1990–1995*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 25 et seq.

⁴ W. Szczepański, *Jugosławia*, in: *Vademecum Balkanisty. Lata 500–2007*, ed. by I. Czamańska, Z. Pentek, Poznań 2009, p. 152.

⁵ For more see: A. Krzak, *Słowenia – początek końca Jugosławii. Wojna dziesięciodniowa*, in: *Balkany Zachodnie między przeszłością a przyszłością*, ed. by P. Chmielewski and S.L. Szczesio, Łódź 2013, pp. 105–127; D. Guštin, V. Prebilič, *Interoperability in Practice: Case Study of the Slovenian Independence War of 1991, “Istorija 20. veka”* 2015, br. 2, pp. 167–182.

⁶ S.P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias. State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005*, Washington 2006, p. 397. This did not yet mean the recognition of the independence of Slovenia, which found itself “on the sidelines” of hostilities between Croats and Serbs.

⁷ For more on the situation in Croatia, see *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990–1995*, vol. I, Washington 2002, pp. 81 et seq.

several months, symbols of the conflict in this Trans-Adriatic republic included the siege of Vukovar and Dubrovnik⁸. Undoubtedly, the world media also had an impact. As Maciej Czerwinski wrote: “Images of Serbian atrocities, expelled civilians carrying children in their arms and the ruins of destroyed cities circulated in the world media. This began to win Croatia the sympathy of Western countries, hitherto reluctant to recognise its national aspirations”⁹. The world was shocked that, decades after the end of the Second World War and just after the end of the Cold War rivalry in Europe, there could be bloodshed.

Initially, decision-makers from the EEC countries sought to end the Balkan conflict by their own efforts and means, without American support. The already-mentioned Dutch minister H. van den Broeck declared in July 1991 that the Americans had done a good job in the Gulf War, but that Yugoslavia was part of Europe and thus Europe would take the lead in solving its own crises¹⁰. The Americans readily agreed, with Secretary of State James Baker stating: “our vital national interests were not at stake. [...] The result was an undercurrent in Washington, often felt but seldom spoken, that it was time to make the Europeans step up to the plate and show that they could act as a unified power. Yugoslavia was a good a first test as any”¹¹. Western states tried to support the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia until the autumn of 1991. However, as more and more people were killed in Croatia, there was increasing pressure from, among others, certain media or politicians to recognise the aspirations of the two SFRY republics for sovereignty. These aspirations of Croats and Slovenes were also identified with by many US congressmen at the time, who called on the US administration to act decisively and put pressure on Belgrade to end the conflict.

Over time, the authorities of the European states realised that they could not solve the Balkan crisis on their own and the United Nations was brought into the diplomatic effort. Negotiations led to another ceasefire in early January 1992¹², which allowed the deployment of UN peacekeepers in the Croatian state and a partial cessation of the war. However, the challenge for America and the EEC in early 1992 was the threat of a new armed conflict – in multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). At that time, representatives of the Bush administration decided to change their policy on the independence of the post-Yugoslav republics. In early April 1992, the EEC countries and the USA recognised BiH as a sovereign and independent state¹³. As Henryk Batowski noted, “Bosnia could have become a second

⁸ The attacks on this city were described by the French philosopher, Andre Glucksmann, as a “moral Pearl Harbour” – quoted in T. Gallagher, *The Balkans after the Cold War. From Tyranny to Tragedy*, London 2003, p. 67. There have been allegations against the Croats that they provoked the Serbs into shelling Dubrovnik in order to portray them in a negative light, using foreign media, S.L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington 1995, p. 182. For more on the siege of the two cities, see A. Krzak, *Wojna w Chorwacji 1991. Oblężenie Vukovaru*, in: *Konflikty militarne i niemilitarne na Bałkanach w XX i XXI wieku w perspektywie polemologicznej*, ed. D. Gibas-Krzak and A. Krzak, Warszawa–Szczecin 2013; P. Żurek, *Oblężenie Dubrownika (1991–1992)*, in: *Balkany Zachodnie między...*, pp. 129–152.

⁹ M. Czerwiński, *Chorwacja. Dzieje, kultura, idee*, Kraków 2020, p. 653.

¹⁰ L. Sell, *Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Durham–London 2002, p. 146.

¹¹ J.A. Baker III (with T.M. DeFrank), *The Politics of Diplomacy. Revolution, War and Peace 1989–1992*, New York 1995, pp. 636–637.

¹² D. Marijan, *The Sarajevo Ceasefire – Realism or Strategic Error by the Croatian Leadership?*, “Review of Croatian History” 2011, no. 1, p. 103.

¹³ A. Krawczyk, *Czyja jest Bośnia? Krótka historia kraju trzech narodów*, Kraków 2021, pp. 216, 219; W. Walkiewicz, *Jugosławia. Państwa sukcesyjne*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 260–261. The Americans also recognised the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. Macedonia remained in the diplomatic “waiting room”.

Switzerland, where, in a system of cantons and national sub-cantons, all nations could have coexisted in harmony – if the mentality there had allowed for such a thing. Unfortunately, the opposite has happened¹⁴.

From the beginning of April 1992, fighting erupted in various parts of “Yugoslavia in miniature”, and the Serbs soon captured around 70% of the territory of the state¹⁵, which was admitted to the UN in May 1992. It was a war of “all against all”, and in addition, as Krzysztof Krysienieli noted, “during the fighting various, often surprising alliances were formed. Already in the second half of 1992, the first symptoms of a Serbo-Croatian agreement emerged, concluded after the Muslim-Croatian alliance had broken down, as a result of territorial disputes¹⁶. Once again, the West watched helplessly as another armed conflict took place on the ruins of the SFRY. As Ronald Neitzke, one of the American diplomats working in Zagreb at the time, noted, US policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts in the summer of 1992 was “the active side of indifference”, as it stood by: “It’s not our problem. We are not going to let it become our problem. We will help out where we can, mainly on the humanitarian relief side, without becoming entangled in conflicts. We will participate in diplomatic initiatives aimed at halting the violence, but we’re not about to get out front¹⁷. It is also worth remembering, as Kurt Bassuener mentions, that the authorities in Washington at the time relied on a cool and realistic calculation that the risks to American interests in that part of the world did not justify the need for US military intervention¹⁸ and the sending of thousands of troops, as happened, for example, after Iraq occupied Kuwait.

When new information about the drama of thousands of civilians in BiH¹⁹, came to light in the media in early August 1992, the staff of a team of experts supporting the work of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee²⁰ – Peter Woodard Galbraith and Michelle Maynard – were sent to the Balkans. The result of their visit to the countries following the break-up of the SFRY was, among other things, a report outlining evidence of ethnic cleansing, which also confirmed that the State Department had previous information on this subject²¹. As they themselves wrote in the introduction, they spoke to dozens of refugees, eyewitnesses of atrocities in BiH, as well as representatives of international

¹⁴ H. Batowski, *Problem bośniacki – podstawy historyczne*, “Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej” 1994, vol. II, p. 36.

¹⁵ M.A. Hoare, *The War of Yugoslav Succession*, in: *Central and Southeast...*, p. 125.

¹⁶ K. Krysienieli, *W cieniu Dayton. Bośnia i Hercegowina między etnokracją i demokracją konsocjonalną*, Warszawa 2012, p. 173.

¹⁷ *Interview with Ronald J. Neitzke. Library of Congress. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, <https://memory.loc.gov/service/mss/mfdip/2010/2010nei01/2010nei01.pdf> (access: 10 October 2023).

¹⁸ K. Bassuener, *The Reluctant, Intermittent Interventionist: US Foreign Policy in the Former Yugoslavia 1991–to Date*, in: *A New Eastern Question? Great Powers and the Post-Yugoslav States*, ed. S. Keil and B. Stahl, Stuttgart 2022, p. 111.

¹⁹ This was information about the existence of special camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the warring parties held prisoners, often in appalling conditions. This news contributed to the appointment of a Special Rapporteur by the UN Commission on Human Rights, which Tadeusz Mazowiecki. See more *Raporty Tadeusza Mazowieckiego z byłej Jugosławii*, Poznań-Warszawa 1993, pp. 9 et seq.

²⁰ It is worth mentioning that at the time, Senator Joe Biden, i.e. the current President of the United States, was a member of this committee, which also engaged in issues concerning the post-Yugoslav area. See more J. Biden, *Promises to keep. On Life and Politics*, New York 2008, pp. 246 et seq.

²¹ See more: *Interview with Ronald J. Neitzke...; The Ethnic Cleansing of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, Washington [August] 1992.

organisations (such as the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross), officials from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina or the so-called new Yugoslavia²², human rights activists and American diplomats in Belgrade and Zagreb and Western journalists²³.

Peter Woodard Galbraith, born in 1950, is one of three sons of Catherine Atwater Galbraith and famed economist and diplomat John Kenneth Galbraith²⁴. After completing his education at Harvard, Oxford and Georgetown, he was a staff member and expert on the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1979 to 1993. There he dealt with the Afghan problem, the Kurdish problem and the Iraq-Iran war, among others. He wrote several reports on Iraq, taking a particular interest in the Kurdish issue in Saddam Hussein's rule of Iraq, visiting the country several times and obtaining, among other things, documents confirming the crimes of the regime²⁵. As a recognised expert on Iraq, he visited the disintegrating Yugoslavia four times in 1991 and 1992²⁶, and one element of these missions was the aforementioned report *The Ethnic Cleansing of Bosnia-Herzegovina*²⁷. In 1993, he became the first American ambassador to the Republic of Croatia and completed his mission in Zagreb in 1998. Later, he worked, among others, as a lecturer, advisor in Iraq, UN envoy in East Timor and in Afghanistan. In 2003, he testified as a witness in The Hague during the trial of Slobodan Milošević, and in 2008 during the trial of Croatian General Ante Gotovina. His second wife was a Norwegian sociologist, Tone Bringa, whose research interests include the Balkans²⁸. He was the author of several books and articles on Iraqi and Balkan issues²⁹.

²² Namely, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia created from Serbia and Montenegro on 27 April 1992. P. Żurek, *Slobodan Milošević przeciwko doktrynie "słaba Serbia – mocna Jugosławia" (1986–1992)*, "Balcanica Posnaniensia" 2021, vol. XXVIII, no. 2, p. 155; E. Bujwid-Kurek, *Państwa jugosłowiańskie. Szkice polityczno-logiczne*, Kraków 2008, p. 151.

²³ *The Ethnic Cleansing of Bosnia-Herzegovina...*, p. V.

²⁴ John Kenneth Galbraith (1908–2006) is an American-Canadian economist, long-time lecturer at Harvard University in Cambridge, US ambassador to India from 1961 to 1963, author of many well-known books and publications on economics and advisor to US presidents. For more see R.D. Parker, *John Kenneth Galbraith. His Life, His Politics, His Economics*, New York 2005.

²⁵ See more: S. Power, "A Problem from Hell". *America and the Age of Genocide*, New York 2013, pp. 180 et seq; *Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, <https://adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Galbraith-Peter-W.pdf> (access: 12 November 2023).

²⁶ *Transcripts Case IT-02-54. Prosecutor vs. Slobodan Milošević, 25 June 2003*, <https://ucr.imct.org/Legal-Ref/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-02-54/TRS298R0000034063.doc> (access: 8 November 2023).

²⁷ When Galbraith travelled to the former Yugoslavia in October 1992 with the co-author of this report, M. Maynard, while in Belgrade, among other places, they gave copies to officials of the "new" Yugoslavia, including its then prime minister, a US millionaire with Serbian roots, Milan Panić. Ibidem.

²⁸ T. Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian village*, Princeton 1995.

²⁹ Among his works are, for example, P.W. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq. How American Incompetence Created a War Without End*, New York 2006; idem, *Unintended Consequences. How War in Iraq Strengthened America's Enemies*, New York 2008; idem, *Diplomacy Helps Contain the Bosnian Conflict*, "SAIS Review" 1995, vol. 15, no. 2; idem, *Negotiating Peace in Croatia: A Personal Account of the Road to Erdut*, in: *War and the Change in Balkans. Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. by B.K. Blitz, Cambridge 2006; idem, *Turning Points: Key Decisions in Making Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*, in: *Islam and Bosnia. Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*, ed. by M. Shatzmiller, Montreal 2002; idem, *Washington, Erdut and Dayton: Negotiating and Implementing Peace in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, "Cornell International Law Journal" 1997, vol. 30, no. 3. For more on the figure of P. Galbraith see *Appointments*, "State" [July-August] 1993, no. 368, pp. 24–25; M. Fixdal, I.O. Busterud, *The Undiplomatic Diplomat: Peter Galbraith*, in:

Although at the time of the recognition of the new countries by the G. Bush's recognition of the new states in April 1992, the Americans announced the rapid establishment of full diplomatic relations with Slovenia, BiH and Croatia, this was, however, delayed for various reasons. In the case of the Bosnian state, the ongoing war was an obstacle. In Croatia, the Americans wanted to demonstrate their dislike of its policy towards BiH³⁰. Therefore, it was only in August 1992 that full diplomatic contacts were established and the American consulate in Zagreb was transformed into an embassy. Ronald Neitzke became head of mission – as *chargé d'affaires ad interim*, and after the election of the ambassador in 1993 – his deputy. The outpost in the Croatian capital played an important role in US diplomacy activities in the Balkans. Among other things, the headquarters of the UN peacekeeping force (after its evacuation from Sarajevo), the UNHCR representative office, which ran a humanitarian mission to BiH, and some members of the Bosnian government worked there.

In September 1992, President G. Bush nominated a candidate for the position of ambassador to Croatia³¹ – lawyer Mara Letica. Her father, Ilija, had worked as Franjo Tuđman's economic advisor. Another associate of the Croatian president, Slaven Letica (coincidental coincidence of names), stated that this was the best diplomatic gesture by the US at the time. However, the nomination of a figure, clearly pro-Croatian, was criticised in, for example, *The New York Times* and was ultimately not accepted by the US Senate³². This meant a vacancy in the position, especially when there was a change at the top of power in Washington. As of January 1993, Bill Clinton became the new American president. In the election campaign, this politician also attacked his rival for the White House on foreign policy. At the time, he called on the US authorities to act decisively, thus presenting views similar to many congressmen and “hawks” on the issue of engagement in the Balkans. However, as noted by Krzysztof Michalek, “the new president had neither much international experience nor initial interest in this issue, believing that the US position in the world was determined by the state of its economy and thus the focus should be on improving its overall condition”³³. The leader of the superpower, who indeed initially planned to focus on America's domestic troubles, soon found that he also had to face many challenges internationally³⁴. Of course, he got the problems, as it were, “inherited” from the team of G. Bush and, as he wrote in his memoirs: “There was so much to do [...] and respond to

Ways Out of War. Peacemakers in the Middle East and Balkans, ed. by M. Fixdal, New York 2012, pp. 139–162; *Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith...*

³⁰ See more P. Żurek, *Bośnia i Hercegowina w wizji politycznej Franjo Tuđmana*, in: *Bośnia i Hercegowina 15 lat po Dayton. Przeszość – teraźniejszość – perspektywy. Studia i szkice*, ed. by P. Chmielewski and S.L. Szczesio, Łódź 2011, pp. 13–24.

³¹ *Nomination of United States Ambassadors to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia September 17, 1992*, “Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents”, 21 September 1992, vol. 28, no. 38, pp. 1683–1684.

³² See more: J.-F. Morel, *American-Croatian Relations during the 1990s.*, in: *Croatia since Independence. War, Politics, Society, Foreign Relations*, ed. by S.P. Ramet, K. Clewing and R. Lukic, München 2008, pp. 358, 376, annotation 31.

³³ K. Michalek, *Amerykańskie stulecie. Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1900–2001*, Warszawa 2004, p. 690.

³⁴ For more on Clinton's foreign policy see: J. Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy. Between the Bushes, 1992–2000*, London-New York 2009; R.C. Hendrickson, *The Clinton Wars. The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers*, Nashville 2002; T.H. Henriksen, *Clinton's Foreign Policy in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and North Korea*, Stanford 1996.

unfolding events. There would be a lot of them [...] The 'to do' list was growing"³⁵. The Clinton administration, like its predecessor, was wary of risky operations beyond its borders, especially when ground troops were involved, increasing the likelihood of US soldiers being killed. One such potential target could have been the post-Yugoslavia area...

With a new host in the White House, a huge challenge for the international community in the Balkan Peninsula remained the question of ending hostilities and bringing all parties to a peace agreement. The conflict in Croatia, which seemed to have been extinguished by the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force in 1992, resurfaced in early 1993. Zagreb made an unsuccessful attempt to retake some of the lost lands.

However, the drama of hundreds of thousands of citizens of the Bosnian state unfolding before the eyes of the world remained the biggest problem for the West. It is also worth remembering that in this conflict, in some parts of BiH, it was war of "all against all", as the existing allies – Muslims and Croats – also started a war among themselves. Obviously, this was to the advantage of the Bosnian Serbs, controlling around 70 per cent of the country's territory at all times, and the commander of their armed forces, General Ratko Mladić stated: "I will watch them destroy each other and then I will push them both into the sea"³⁶. This highly complicated situation on the frontlines in BiH undoubtedly hampered attempts by international mediators to find a compromise between the several sides in the war, as well as discouraging some states, such as the US, from getting involved in this "boiling cauldron". As Marek Waldenberg aptly observed, "The Clinton administration, when taking the helm of state, had no concrete concept of policy towards Bosnia and did not realise the complexity of the situation and the difficulty of developing a plan of action, setting American priorities and steps that would be accepted by European allies"³⁷. Washington proposed in May 1993 to lift sanctions on arms for Bosnian Muslims and airstrikes on Serb positions to help the authorities in Sarajevo use this time to buy weapons. The administration's new plan was abbreviated to *lift and strike*³⁸, but it did not gain the approval of its European partners.

For the Americans, the rejection of this proposal in the Balkans was undoubtedly a painful blow, which undoubtedly discouraged further action. The US authorities temporarily withdrew from plans for active involvement in this part of the Old Continent. At the time, Clinton's policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts was incomprehensible to many, lacking clear goals towards which the superpower would move, and was described by Michael Brenner as "a study in ambiguity"³⁹. And it was under such difficult circumstances that Galbraith appeared in the Balkans. Indeed, the US authorities made the selection of the first US ambassador to Croatia. The nomination of this experienced expert of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was announced by the administration of Clinton on 13 May

³⁵ B. Clinton, *My Life*, New York 2004, p. 447.

³⁶ L. Silber, A. Little, *Yugoslavia. Death of a Nation*, New York 1997, p. 295.

³⁷ M. Waldenberg, *Rozbicie Jugosławii. Jugosłowiańskie lustro międzynarodowej polityki*, Warszawa 2005, p. 182.

³⁸ E. Drew, *On the Edge. The Clinton Presidency*, New York 1995, p. 155. See more: A. Orzelska, *Wpływ konfliktu...*, pp. 111–119.

³⁹ Quoted in J. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will. International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York 1997, p. 214. The State Department's reluctance to deal with the Bosnian issue at this time is confirmed, for example, by P. Galbraith, P.W. Galbraith, *Turning Points...*, pp. 137–138.

1993. Within a month, it was approved by the aforementioned Congressional body⁴⁰. On 26 June, Galbraith arrived in Zagreb. He soon became one of the key figures in American diplomacy efforts towards the Yugoslav conflicts. Already on 28 June 1993, i.e. on the 504th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Field, he submitted letters of credence to President F. Tudman. At that time, he drew attention to the role that Croatia could play in the process of resolving the crisis in BiH, stopping the violence and achieving a peaceful solution⁴¹. As he later admitted in an interview, relations between Zagreb and Washington were “cool” at the time for several reasons. The Croats, although very much counting on the superpower’s support, were mindful of the reluctance of the US authorities towards their aspirations to leave the SFRY and the subsequent postponement of the decision to recognise their independence, to establish full diplomatic relations and to appoint an ambassador to the former Yugoslav republic. However, at the same time, they were aware of their difficult position: one third of the country controlled by Serbs, destruction as a result of warfare, problems with tourism, etc. The Croatian authorities hoped to be supported by the powerful America, which, after all, was home to many emigrants from the Balkans and had a strong lobby. However, in Washington, whether in the administration of G. Bush or B. Clinton, F. Tudman did not have a good reputation, and he was considered one of the accomplices in the tragedy of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia, authoritarian ruling, etc.⁴²

Galbraith later admitted that another factor contributing to the Washington administration’s negative reception of the Croatian president was his anti-Semitism. His infamous campaign statement in Croatia in 1990, “Thank God my wife is neither a Jew nor a Serb”, was widely remembered. He had also authored a book downplaying the death toll at the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp, operated by the Ustaše (Croatian fascists) in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). According to an American diplomat, “All of this made him not very popular and he was in his personal style very unlovable”. Another factor contributing to the State Department’s unfavorable stance toward the Croatian state at that time was the ongoing conflict between Bosnian Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This included incidents such as the Ahmići massacre – the mass murder of Muslim civilians by members of the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) in April 1993 – and other atrocities. This brutal war between former allies further alienated the United States from Croatia. When the new ambassador arrived in Croatia, from the beginning he tried to emphasise the “territorial integrity” of the whole country, but also of neighbouring BiH. The Americans wanted to send a clear signal that there was no agreement on their part with Tudman’s ambitions to possibly “carve up” part of “Yugoslavia in miniature”. Galbraith went on a visit to Vukovar, the symbol city, in July 1993, where, when asked why he had come here, he replied: “I am the American ambassador to Croatia and I went to Vukovar, Croatia”. He added that the Serbs had “stolen the land” and the only acceptable solution

⁴⁰ *Nomination for Posts at the Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and State Departments May 13, 1993*, “Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States”, *William J. Clinton, 1993*, Book 1, *January 20 to July 31, 1993*, Washington 1994, p. 656; *Legislative Calendar (Cumulative Record). Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate. One Hundred Third Congress*, [Washington] 1993, p. 59.

⁴¹ *U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith at the Presentation of his Credentials. June 28, 1993, Statement*, in: *The United States and Croatia. A Documentary History, 1992–1997*, [foreword P.W. Galbraith] Washington 1997, p. 5.

⁴² *Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith...*

was to return it to the control of Zagreb⁴³. In August 1993, he travelled to another of the symbols of the Serbo-Croat war, Dubrovnik. Galbraith had been to the “pearl of the Adriatic” before, during one of his missions as an expert of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1991. As Ambassador, he stated with conviction that “the fate of Dubrovnik and Vukovar opened the public’s eyes to what was happening in Croatia”, which undoubtedly had a bearing on the question of recognition of the country by other states in 1992⁴⁴.

Almost from the beginning of his presence, his message was clear: support for the integrity of the Croatian state and its struggle to regain the lands controlled by the authorities of the Republika Srpska Krajina. He quickly became a very popular person, appearing in the media, portrayed even as the object of women’s sighs or the “most attractive diplomat” in Zagreb⁴⁵. However, some accused him of being too close to the Croats and lacking objectivity. One UN official even called him the “Croatian ambassador to America” and another referred to him as the “prince of darkness” – through his close association with the authoritarian ruling F. Tuđman⁴⁶.

An important issue at the time was the ongoing Croatian-Muslim conflict, symbolised among other things by the fighting in Mostar and the destruction of the historic bridge⁴⁷. The US ambassador had no clear instructions because, as previously mentioned, the State Department had not developed a coherent concept for resolving the conflicts in the post-Yugoslav area, a kind of “road map”. For Galbraith, however, the key issue became ending the Croatian-Muslim war – he considered this his “diplomatic priority”⁴⁸. According to the ambassador, this would save many innocent lives and “open the door” to cooperation between the two nations, which could rearm, despite the embargo officially in force. The alliance would then have a better chance in the fight against the Serbs, which could lead to a balance of power on the fronts and end the bloodshed. During his meetings with Croatian leaders, President F. Tuđman, Defence Minister Gojko Šušak and Foreign Minister Mate Granić, the Ambassador tried to convince them to change their existing policies. An important partner in these efforts, according to the American diplomat, was precisely the head of Croatian diplomacy, who was more willing to make concessions and open to cooperation with the West than the president⁴⁹.

⁴³ M. Fixdal, I.O. Busterud, *The Undiplomatic Diplomat...*, pp. 143–144. See also *U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith. The Destruction of Vukovar Is A War Crime. Osijek, Croatia. July 15, 1993. Remarks*, in: *The United States and Croatia...*, pp. 8–9. The trip to Vukovar, which the new ambassador considered the “Croatian Alamo”, was suggested by his deputy, R. Neitzke, and was accompanied by a number of Croatian and American journalists, including Roy Gutman of Newsday, who had won the Pulitzer Prize a year earlier for his reporting from BiH. According to Galbraith, the city looked like Berlin in 1945. *Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith...*

⁴⁴ A. Bing, *The Media-Political Paradigm: Dubrovnik and the Creation of the Croatian State*, in: *Reporting the Attacks on Dubrovnik in 1991, and the Recognition of Croatia*, ed. by R. de la Brosse and M. Brautović, Cambridge 2017, p. 23.

⁴⁵ M. Fixdal, I.O. Busterud, *The Undiplomatic Diplomat...*, p. 144; J.-F. Morel, *American-Croatian Relations...*, p. 360.

⁴⁶ D.N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm. Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Nashville 2009, p. 159.

⁴⁷ See more: A. Krawczyk, *Czyja jest Bośnia?...*, pp. 297 et seq.

⁴⁸ P.W. Galbraith, *Turning Points...*, pp. 137–138.

⁴⁹ Zagreb’s policy towards BiH was criticised by the West, but also by some Croatian opposition parties and the Church, as well as some Bosnian Croats. T. Stryjek, *Współczesna Serbia i Chorwacja wobec własnej historii*, Warszawa 2020, p. 498.

A change in the leadership of the Bosnian Croats, led by the “hardliner” Mate Boban, was also to be key to success. Galbraith accused him of behaving like a “war criminal” and forced the release of several thousand prisoners from Croatian camps in BiH. The pressure exerted on Croatian politicians eventually had an effect⁵⁰. At the beginning of 1994, Boban was replaced by the moderate Krešimir Zubak⁵¹.

In August 1993, the special envoy of B. Clinton for the Balkans became Charles Redman. He, too, became actively involved in diplomacy, working with, among others, P. Galbraith to end the Muslim-Croat conflict and create a joint federation of the two nations inhabiting “Yugoslavia in miniature”. As Andrzej Krawczyk noted, “the Americans were proceeding on the assumption that hostility and emotions were much lower in this case than towards the Serbs, and besides, historically there was a great potential for Croatian-Bosnian cooperation (see, for example, the theories from the Second World War years that Muslims from Bosnia were the best part of the Croatian nation)”⁵².

The involvement of Croatian troops in BiH was repeatedly reported in the media, as well as by representatives of the international community, so that American representatives threatened Tudman and his colleagues that they could lead to the isolation of their country, hitherto regarded as a victim of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, in order to convince Zagreb to cooperate, openness to Euro-Atlantic integration, international loans for the reconstruction of the country, membership of the Council of Europe, etc., were proposed⁵³.

The embassy in the Croatian capital has thus played an important role in US diplomacy efforts towards the Yugoslav conflicts since 1993, growing into the number one outpost in the region, with responsibility for the BiH area, among others⁵⁴. The US post in Sarajevo was not operational for a long time, and even after it was up and running, working in the besieged capital did not make the task of its staff any easier. By contrast, the representation in Belgrade, in a country still not recognised by the United States, had many difficulties through the sanctions and restrictions imposed, for example on movement in the region. There was the constant threat of closing the embassy and completely severing diplomatic relations with Belgrade. This involved, among other things, the contemplated options of US/NATO military intervention. Due to the sanctions and restrictions in place, Americans in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had a difficult time contacting other parts of the region. It should also be remembered that, at that time, hyperinflation was “raging” in Serbia and Montenegro, the economy was in dire straits, and the public was increasingly painfully affected by the international community, which S. Milošević accused of violating the UN Charter and “crimes against the people”, expressing the hope that this was “the last genocide of this century”⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ M. Fixdal, I.O. Busterud, *The Undiplomatic Diplomat...*, pp. 144–145; *Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith...*

⁵¹ A. Čuvalo, *Historical Dictionary of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2nd ed., Lanham 2007, pp. 261–262.

⁵² A. Krawczyk, *Czyja jest Bośnia?...*, p. 302.

⁵³ M. Fixdal, I.O. Busterud, *The Undiplomatic Diplomat...*, p. 144; P.W. Galbraith, *Turning Points...*, pp. 138–141.

⁵⁴ Galbraith, in an interview, pointed out the growth in the size of the post. At the end of 1991, when it was still operating as a consulate, there were five diplomats working there; when the first ambassador arrived in mid-1993 – around 20, and by the time his mission to Zagreb ended in 1998 – more than 60 (plus 120 Croatian staff), *Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith...*

⁵⁵ Quoted in M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, *Serbia pod rządami Slobodana Miloševića. Serbska polityka wobec rozpadu Jugosławii w latach dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku*, Kraków 2008, p. 156.

After the change among Croatian leaders in BiH, the Americans pressed Zagreb to re-establish an alliance with the Muslims and to create a Muslim-Croat federation. Redman and Galbraith participated in talks on this subject with Tuđman and his associates. Support was offered, e.g. in the peaceful recovery of lost lands in 1991 and integration into Western political, economic and military structures. Despite the Croatian president's reluctance, American diplomats succeeded in overcoming his resistance, which meant moving closer to reconstituting an anti-Serb coalition aimed at changing fronts in Croatia and BiH. At the end of February 1994, negotiations began in Washington, under the auspices of the Americans, between Muslims and Croats. Ambassador P. Galbraith was one of the participants in these important talks. In the end, the talks were successful and culminated in the official signing of the agreement in Washington on 18 March 1994 in the presence of, among others: the US President B. Clinton, BiH's President Alija Izetbegović, Croatia's President F. Tuđman.

Thanks to American pressure, the Croatian-Muslim conflict in BiH was brought to an end and the foundations were laid for a new structure, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The support of Croatian President F. Tuđman for this idea was one of the important objectives for the superpower's diplomats in the region, aiming to achieve a balance on the fronts and persuade the conflicting parties to end the war⁵⁶. The Washington Agreement of March 1994 was called by Ambassador P. Galbraith the first US diplomatic success since the break-up of the SFRY, as well as the "cornerstone" of the future Dayton Peace Agreement, which was concluded in November 1995⁵⁷.

* * *

When analysing the process of the disintegration of the SFRY and the attempts of Western diplomats to join the negotiations, it is necessary to emphasise the reluctance of the administration in Washington, for a long time, to be active in the region in both the Bush and Clinton administrations.

Peter Galbraith, initially as an experienced expert of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, although not yet specialised in Balkan issues at the time, and from 1993 onwards as the first ambassador to Croatia, played a significant role in the resolution of conflicts in the Balkans in the last decade of the 20th century. His personal involvement, supported, of course, by the work of other US diplomats, was one of the important factors in shaping US policy towards the region and attempts to achieve a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflicts that plunged the former SFRY area. At the time he took up his post in mid-1993, a war was underway there involving all sides, including the initial allies, i.e. Croats and Muslims, which put the militarily strong Serbs in a privileged position and made it impossible to end the conflict to the satisfaction of the West. One of Galbraith's main objectives was to support the territorial integrity of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Ambassador also sought to involve the authorities in Zagreb, despite many objections from the Americans,

⁵⁶ K. Bassuener, *The Reluctant...*, p. 112.

⁵⁷ *Transcripts Case No. IT-06-90-T Gotovina et Al.*, 24 June 2008, <https://ucr.irnet.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Transcript/NotIndexable/IT-06-90/TRS7452R0000226764.doc> (access: 6 November 2023). More on the Dayton Agreement see A. Krawczyk, *Czyja jest Bośnia?*..., pp. 315–327; R. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York 1998, pp. 231–312.

in the process of ending the Bosnian war. Therefore, together with Ch. Redman, he embarked on a months-long effort to persuade F. Tudman to reject the vision of a Greater Croatia, change the leadership of the Bosnian Croats and re-establish an alliance with the Muslims. It was an arduous and difficult process, but the strategy of encouragement and threats proved successful. While both Bush and Clinton had a hard time convincing US generals to direct their ground troops to the Balkans, according to the new strategy, those troops were to be Croats and the BiH Federation forces. Galbraith's actions were met with mixed reactions. On the one hand, some saw him as a fighter for human rights and a defender of the victims of the Balkan conflicts, but on the other hand, others criticised him for being too one-sided in his approach to the war and for his close relations with those in power in Croatia and in BiH. Moreover, after the Washington Agreement, the ambassador was a very active diplomat in the face of further challenges in Croatia and BiH, including the issue of arms supplies from Iran, talks between Croatian Serbs and Zagreb, Operation Oluja, etc. By then, however, the attitude of the superpower leadership towards the Yugoslav conflicts would have changed, and the most important figure in the Clinton administration would become Richard Holbrooke, who would eventually succeed in achieving the successful Dayton Accords at the end of 1995.

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