

Austrian and German Quality Daily Newspapers and Croatia's Road to Independence

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the editorials and reporting on Croatia in the period between April 1990 and January 1992 in several quality daily newspapers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Tageszeitung* from Germany, and *Der Standard* and *Die Presse* from Austria. Even though a pro-Croatian bias was expected due to the political support Croatia received from these countries, the newspapers analysed herein represent a broad political spectrum, allowing for differences in opinion and the extent of bias. To show how these newspapers approached and chose to represent the events in Croatia, I used a qualitative framing analysis. Results showed that all newspapers identified and focused on Croats as the victims and Serbs as the aggressors during the hostilities, but with a varying degree of bias. Towards the end of 1991 the international recognition of Croatia became the dominant frame of the reporting and the respective national newspapers turned to their own politicians' role in the process.

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Introduction

Germany and Austria hold a special place whenever the international recognition of Croatia is discussed. They are often hailed as Croatia's best friends during her road to independence in the early 1990s. Their respective ministers of foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Alois Mock, are remembered as outspoken ambassadors of the Croatian cause, and their accomplishments have been the subject. How the German and Austrian daily quality newspapers covered this relationship, and the events in Croatia in general during these two years, has not been extensively researched. Hence I have chose to analyse this problem by looking at three newspapers from Germany, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Tageszeitung*, as well as two from Austria, *Die Presse* and *Der Standard*.

In the first chapter, I will contextualise my research by explaining the foreign policy circumstances facing Germany and Austria in 1990 and 1991, as well how their policies towards Croatia were moulded by Genscher and Mock, especially in relation to the European Community and the United States. The chapter will also explain the theoretical framework, the methodological approach as well as give a detailed overview of the newspapers used in my research.

The second chapter will deal with the ways how the German quality daily press covered the events in Croatia, looking for similarities or differences in their approach to the issues of the first free elections in 1990, the war in 1991 and ending with the international recognition in 1992.

In the third chapter I will look at the Austrian quality daily press and how they approached Croatia during the same time span using the same key events as the previous chapter, and compare the results.

1. Framing the Framing: Context, Theory, Methodology and the Players

1.1 Germany, Austria and the Yugoslav Crisis

During the Cold War, Yugoslavia enjoyed substantial prestige in the international community and played an important role in the context of a bipolar world. As this system started to lose its importance in the mid 1980s due to the waning of the Soviet Union's power, so too did Yugoslavia's position in international politics. In 1989, the fall of eastern European Communist regimes all but eliminated the need for Yugoslavia as a buffer state between two blocs. By that year, internal political changes in Yugoslavia were well under way and marked by burgeoning nationalisms. The factionalism in the League of Communist, sometimes also along ethnic lines, was ripe. Above all, the crisis in the Serbian province of Kosovo, where the Serbian ruling elite systematically diminished local Albanians' rights since the early 1980s, indicated that Titoist principles of equality were all but gone.¹

The two Germanies were also on the cusp of a fundamental change in 1989. The regime in the German Democratic Republic was beginning to lose its foothold and the possibility of a reunification in the near future was becoming more and more palpable. In the post war period, the Federal Republic of Germany was inclined to pursue her foreign policy through multilateral diplomacy, and at a moment of a potentially great instability, when it seemed that the Iron Curtain was disappearing faster than most had expected, she had no reason to change this

¹ Sabrina Petra Ramet and Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration Of Yugoslavia From The Death Of Tito To The Fall Of Milosevic*, 4th ed. (Westview Press, 2002). p. 1-49.

approach.² More importantly, the eventuality of a reunification put Germany under a magnifying glass. Her neighbours preferred this process to be delayed for a few years at least, in fear that it would cause a change in the balance of power.³ Hence, Germany was aware that this historic chance was far too precious to waste by unilateral actions, making no exception as far as the Yugoslav crisis was concerned, and acted in accordance with her allies. Germany had build up a solid rapport with Yugoslavia since the annulment of the Hallstein doctrine in 1968.⁴ And even before that, it had signed agreements inviting thousands of guest workers from Yugoslavia to work in German factories, making Yugoslav citizens one of the largest groups of foreigners in Germany. Conversely, Germans made up a majority of tourists on the Croatian coast. Since the mid 1970s, when Hans-Dietrich Genscher became the German minister of foreign affairs, Germany tried to be on good terms with all its neighbours and “opened the path of cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.”⁵

The leading power which defined the Western policy towards Yugoslavia, however, were the United States.⁶ As the human rights abuse in Kosovo became an increasingly problematic issue for Yugoslavia's Western partners, the United States decided in early 1990 to stipulate any financial aid it would provide to Yugoslavia in the future with not only market reforms, but also democratic ones.⁷ That this arrangement would not have any positive effect on

2 Michael Libal, *Limits of Persuasion: Germany and the Yugoslav Crisis, 1991-1992* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997).

3 Peter C. Caldwell and Robert R. Shandley, *German Unification: Expectations and Outcomes*, 1st ed. (Palgrave, 2011).

4 This doctrine dictated that the Federal Republic of Germany would break off all diplomatic relations with any state which recognized the German Democratic Republic as a sovereign entity. It was applied only twice, to Yugoslavia in 1957 and Cuba in 1963.

5 Michael Thumann, “Between Ambition and paralysis—Germany’s Policy Toward Yugoslavia 1991–1993,” *Nationalities Papers* 25, no. 3 (1997): 575–585, p. 575.

6 Eric A. Witte, *Die Rolle Der Vereinigten Staaten Im Jugoslawien-Konflikt Und Der Aussenpolitischen Handlungsspielraum Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1990-1996)* (Osteuropa-Institut Munchen, 2000), p. 30-32.

7 Ibid.

Yugoslavia was ensured by the other conditions of the United States, which demanded “stability, unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.”⁸ The countries of the European Community (EC) were, perhaps not surprisingly, more focused on the events in Eastern Europe and the unravelling of Communism than they were on Yugoslavia. At the same time, a process of deepening relations within the EC was under way as well, making Yugoslavia's inner turmoil even more invisible to the outside world.⁹

Austria found herself in a similar position to Germany in 1989 in that it had to renegotiate its position in relation to her eastern neighbours. Having nurtured neutrality as one of the preconditions for the end of the occupation by the Allied forces after World War II, Austria was now beginning to question this position in the light of a new, Communism-free Europe. The “ongoing neutrality,” formulated by the State Treaty of 1955 lost its meaning in the new European political constellation. The driving force in this process was the Austrian minister of foreign affairs Alois Mock. In office since 1987, he continued the post-war tradition of a very active Austrian diplomacy but redirected its focus away from the global level, where Austria often acted as a mediator in regional conflicts, and onto central Europe.¹⁰ He sought better relations with the neighbouring countries, aware that without communism closer regional ties were a way to ensure stability. This approach was also amplified by the historic ties to these countries. Mock also initiated Austria's candidacy for EC membership in 1989. In terms of bilateral relations to Yugoslavia, Austria had a mixed record. In the immediate post war period,

8 Ibid.

9 Francesco Privitera, “The Relationship Between the Dismemberment of Yugoslavia and European Integration,” in *Reflections on the Balkan Wars: Ten Years after the Break-up of Yugoslavia*, 1st ed, edited by Jeffrey S. Morton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 36-37.

10 Helmut Kramer, „Austrian Foreign Policy from the State Treaty to European Union Membership (1955-95)“ in *Austria 1945-95: Fifty Years of the Second Republic*, ed. Kurt Richard Luther and Peter Pulzer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.), p 170.-171.

Austria and Yugoslavia clashed on the issue of the border running through the province of Carinthia. The issue was soon settled and the two countries came to have a cordial but distant relationship. After 1970 there began a positive trend of economic and cultural cooperation, but was mostly limited to the republics of Slovenia and Croatia. The cultural cooperation was compounded by the presence of Slovene and Croat minorities living in the Austrian provinces of Carinthia and Burgenland, respectively. According to the State Treaty, Austria was obligated to provide cultural autonomy for Slovenes and Croats.

When the first skirmishes occurred in Croatia in the summer of 1990, the United States were still struggling to implement an effective policy in order to help Yugoslavia out of the crisis. Unfortunately, the path chosen was still very much based on economic aid and the terms “unity” and “stability.”¹¹ What complicated the matter was the United States' insistence that European countries follow their lead, construing a “negative leadership,” one which blocked a possibility of an alternative solution.¹² This situation lasted throughout 1990 and early 1991. Even as late as March of 1991, Genscher held talks with the Slovenian leadership in order to reiterate Germany's position against the dissolution of Yugoslavia.¹³ Even as the Yugoslav crisis worsened rapidly, the German government showed little more than “a mixture of increasing apprehension and persistent optimism which, however, was not strong enough to deflect attention from more pressing concerns.”¹⁴ The official government line was criticized by the opposition, and criticism even came from Helmut Kohl's own party.¹⁵ The idea which prevailed amongst German politicians who disagreed with Kohl was that every nation has a right to self-

11 Thomas Paulsen, *Die Jugoslawienpolitik Der USA 1989-1994: Begrenztes Engagement Und Konfliktodynamik*, 1. Aufl, Aktuelle Materialien Zur Internationalen Politik Bd. 39 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), p. 25.

12 Witte, p. 31.

13 Ibid., p. 45.

14 Libal, p. 4.

15 Thumann, p. 578.

determination, a principle which they thought was relevant for two reasons, it had been used by the South Slavic nations after the First World War to decide their future, and more importantly, it was a popular concept used to justify German reunification by many of these politicians just a few months earlier.¹⁶ According to Witte, this tied in with another German misconception about the Yugoslav crisis. German politicians had a notion of *Spiegelbildigkeit*, an expectation that the politicians in Yugoslavia would act as their own reflection in the mirror, drawing the same conclusions and making the same decisions as they did during the German reunification.¹⁷ This was above all evident in the insistence on non-violent solutions, which had the effect of leaving Slovenia and Croatia to their own devices.¹⁸

Austria, being a small, neutral country, had no say in the shaping of the EC Yugoslav policy. In the February of 1990, Mock greeted the Yugoslav measures for the “political and economic stabilisation of the country,” and welcomed dialogue between the opposing sides as the only way to resolve any problems, adding that these reforms, including a “far-reaching democratising process” would “secure the continued existence of Yugoslavia within the present boundaries.”¹⁹ Thus the official Austrian position on Yugoslavia mirrored the European one to the letter. But privately, Mock was certain that Yugoslavia could not continue existing much longer, a belief he had held for a number of years before the war broke out.²⁰ The Austrian chancellor Franz Vranitzky went as far to claim that the dissolution of Yugoslavia was Mock's “wish and goal.”²¹ Vranitzky was the president of the Social Democratic Party of Austria, which

16 Ibid.

17 Witte, p. 45.

18 Libal, p. 6.

19 “Presseerklärung des Bundesministers für auswärtige Angelegenheiten zur Lage in Jugoslawien,” February 2, 1990, in *Jugoslawische Krise*, ed. Gerhard Weinberger, (Wien: Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, 1992), p. 121.

20 Martin Eichtinger and Helmut Wohnout, *Alois Mock: Ein Politiker Schreibt Geschichte* (Styria Premium, 2008), p. 207.

21 Franz Vranitzky, *Politische Erinnerungen*, (Wien: Zsolnay, 2004), p. 355.

was the senior partner in a coalition government with the Austrian People's Party, of which Mock was the president. The disagreements between Mock and Vranitzky on Yugoslavia would plague Austria's foreign policy until the international recognition of Croatia, and the discord increased as fighting in Croatia got worse. The narrow area where Austria could be active was through the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). In August of 1990 Austria set in motion a mechanism of the CSCE concerning the human rights violations in Kosovo.²² Since this was nothing more than a call for a country to explain the situation in question without any serious repercussions, Austria's measure did not have an effect on the plight of the Albanians in Kosovo, or any influence on the direction the country was taking, even though Serbia did reply.²³ Still, even in January of 1991 Vranitzky stated that he is happy with the improvements in the overall situation in Yugoslavia and that Belgrade will continue to be the partner for any future talks.²⁴ But Mock was doing all in his power to direct the attention of the international community to the Yugoslav crisis, especially through the CSCE, where he pursued the matter of Kosovo Albanians further, but also through other platforms, such as the UN. These attempts were one dimension of his policy, the other being the right of the people of Yugoslavia to self-determination.

The real change in German policy came in the summer of 1991. Genscher had been sent a report by an SDP politician who had recently returned from a fact-finding mission in Yugoslavia. The report openly called for a complete change of EC's Yugoslav policy. The

22 "Aide-Mémoire betreffend Anwendung der ersten Stufe des Mechanismus (Ersuchen um Information)", August 15, 1990 in *Jugoslawische Krise*, ed. Gerhard Weinberger, (Wien: Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, 1992), p. 211.

23 "Aide-Mémoire Jugoslawiens in Beantwortung des österreichischen Aide-Mémoires," September 27, 1990 in *Jugoslawische Krise*, ed. Gerhard Weinberger, (Wien: Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, 1992), p. 213.

24 "Bericht über den Besuch des Präsidenten Kroatiens beim Bundeskanzler," January 29, 1991 in *Jugoslawische Krise*, ed. Gerhard Weinberger, (Wien: Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, 1992), p. 172.

biggest revelation had been that “the idea of a 'democratic, unified Yugoslavia' was a fiction to begin with.”²⁵ The new found insight, as well as Croatia's and Slovenia's declarations of independence, sent Genscher on a fact-finding mission of his own. On July 2nd he met the Yugoslav prime minister Ante Marković and the president of Yugoslavia Stipe Mesić, and also held talks the presidents of the republics of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The next day he met with the Slovenian president Milan Kučan in Austria, as Slovenia's short war against the Yugoslav People's Army had already broken out.²⁶ It seemed that the talks helped Genscher shape his new policy towards Yugoslavia in a manner that diverged from his previous stance. Genscher's new view of the situation was that “[r]ecognition of Croatia and Slovenia became a desirable political option be implemented as soon as the allies were convinced.”²⁷ This shift coincided with the United States taking a back seat role of the crisis management in Yugoslavia, leaving the EC to take command.²⁸ This posed a problem for Germany because she found heavy opposition to her new stance from other EC member states. This was the situation at the start of hostilities in Croatia.

1.2 Literature Review

The wars in the former republics of Yugoslavia during the 1990s were some of the most widely reported conflicts in recent history. Thus it is not surprising that there have been many extensive academic studies on the nature of this reporting. Many of these studies have been

²⁵ Libal, p. 8.

²⁶ Thumann, p. 579.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Witte, p. 52.

written by authors from the United States and the United Kingdom, and have dealt with their domestic media's role in these wars. Some, like James J. Sadkovich's *The US Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995*, focused on the United States media in relation to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and argued that “their failure as having prolonged and aggravated the conflict,” but the author himself admits that his work is incomplete and built around a theoretical patchwork.²⁹ Another example is Gregory Kent's *Framing War and Genocide: British Policy and News Media Reaction to the War in Bosnia*, which looks at how the United Kingdom media's representation of the current events as an extension of “ancient hatreds” and conflicting reporting on the war caused confusion among their audiences, including politicians involved in decision making.³⁰ Joseph Pearson's article “Dubrovnik's Artistic Patrimony, and its Role in War Reporting (1991)” gave insight into the tactics used by the media in the United Kingdom during the bombings of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik.³¹ According to Pearson, these tactics included reports which were “misleading and exaggerated the extent of damage to the old city,” in order to influence the government's decision on whether to intervene in Croatia.³² The volume edited by Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman, *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis*, looks at the practices of Western media during their coverage of the 1999 NATO campaign in Kosovo and Serbia, pointing out that there was a severe lack of a qualified debate in most Western countries covered by this volume, and that the media acted as “cheerleaders” for the “humanitarian intervention” and an “ethical foreign policy”, euphemisms used for

29 James J Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998).

30 Gregory Kent, *Framing War and Genocide: British Policy and News Media Reaction to the War in Bosnia*, Hampton Press Communication Series (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005).

31 Joseph Pearson, “Dubrovnik’s Artistic Patrimony, and Its Role in War Reporting (1991),” *European History Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 197–216, doi:10.1177/0265691410358937.

32 Ibid., p. 1.

justifying the extensive bombings.³³

Other scholars have looked at the media discourse in former Yugoslavia during this period. Two notable examples are Kemal Kurspahić's *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace*, and Mark Thompson's *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina*.³⁴ Both have asserted that the local media took a very active role in attempting to influence the public opinion towards a pro-war stance, often using examples from the past to stoke present ethnic animosities.

These studies show that often the editors and journalists convey ideas and meanings through a set of journalistic practices, which are communicated to their readers as credible information which in turn may shape personal opinion and informs public debates. This is especially true for the newspapers of record, since the information they convey is not only read by the elites, but also by other media as a source of information.³⁵ And while these studies are extensive and cover the relationship between media and the Balkan conflicts from various perspectives, the research on German and Austrian press is missing from this corpus. By looking at the findings of these studies, however, one can assume that the German and Austrian quality daily press also presented stories and news on the dissolution of Yugoslavia through similar journalistic practices. The analysis of these practises is the goal of this thesis.

33 Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman, *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (Pluto Press, 2000).

34 Kemal Kurspahić, *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace* (US Institute of Peace Press, 2003), Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina* (Article 19, 1999).

35 Shannon E. Martin and Kathleen A. Hansen, *Newspapers of Record in a Digital Age: From Hot Type to Hot Link*, Praeger Series in Political Communication (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998).

1.3 Theoretical framework: Framing Analysis

The theoretical approach I have chosen to investigate this hypothesis is the qualitative framing analysis. Framing can most easily be explained as a way to analyse how certain media outlets approach and choose to represent a certain issue. The frame is used when a need to contextualise a certain event arises, such as a series of events but also to influence the decision making of the news' recipient.³⁶ Shanto Iyengar presented a premise that there are two types of news stories: “episodic” and “thematic,” meaning that they are either a “case study or event-orientated report” or “place public issues some more general or abstract context,” and often these two types are intertwined.³⁷ While most media framing analyses are long term and quantitative, my approach will be qualitative due to the relatively short period I am researching. This is a common practice among war reporters who tie an “episodic” event on the ground, i.e. a battle, to the broader political and military developments in order to make sense of the episodic events. The use of framing during wars is demonstrated by some studies, including a long term one on the war reporting in German quality newspapers.³⁸ In addition, “a frame includes not just a series of arguments that share a common perspective of the problem, but also a set of symbols, metaphors, catch phrases, and visual images that can be readily identified as being a part of that frame.”³⁹ This ensures that the same message is reinforced through

36 Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible?: How Television Frames Political Issues*, American Politics and Political Economy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 11.

37 Ibid., p 12-13.

38 Romy Fröhlich, Helmut Scherer, and Bertram Scheufele, “Kriegsberichterstattung in deutschen Qualitätszeitungen,” *Publizistik* 52, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 11–32, doi:10.1007/s11616-007-0003-4., Gregory Kent, *Framing War and Genocide: British Policy and News Media Reaction to the War in Bosnia*, Hampton Press Communication Series (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005), Lorraine Bayard de Volo, “Mobilizing Mothers for War Cross-National Framing Strategies in Nicaragua’s Contra War,” *Gender & Society* 18, no. 6 (December 1, 2004): 715–734, doi:10.1177/0891243204268328.

39 C L Menashe and M Siegel, “The Power of a Frame: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Tobacco issues--United States, 1985-1996,” *Journal of Health Communication* 3, no. 4 (December 1998): 307–325, doi:10.1080/108107398127139.

repetition.

1.4 The Newspapers

The daily newspapers analysed in my thesis have been selected according to their circulation, their political orientation as well as status in their respective countries. All five newspapers offer in depth reporting on varying domestic and foreign themes, more so than other daily publications in Germany and Austria. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is a broadsheet from Frankfurt and is considered to be Germany's newspaper of record. Founded in November of 1949, it was the most widely read quality daily newspaper in Germany during the period covered in this thesis. The political orientation of the newspaper is conservative,⁴⁰ and the editorial staff is closely linked with the Christian Democratic Union, Germany's leading centre-right party.⁴¹ In the case of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the editorials on Croatia were most often written by Johann Georg Reißmüller, one of the publishers of the newspaper. In other four newspapers there were no such instances. Even though Reißmüller was the most prominent author of texts on Yugoslavia, Viktor Meier was actually the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* correspondent for Yugoslavia (and also Romania and Hungary). Although his articles appeared often, he rarely wrote editorials and commentaries and his reports were far more objective than the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* editorials written by other authors. The Munich based *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, founded in 1945, was the second most popular quality daily newspaper

40 The conservative nature of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is reflect even in the layout, with the titles of editorial pieces printed in gothic font.

41 Markus Brauck, "Venerated German Paper Gets a Makeover: A Lack of Joie de Vivre," *Spiegel Online*, September 24, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/venerated-german-paper-gets-a-makeover-can-faz-s-new-look-halt-shrinking-circulation-a-507549-2.html>.

daily during the early 1990s, behind *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, with its popularity stemming from “the pointed criticism of the opinion pages and the timely analysis of the cultural and social changes taking place in Germany and the rest of the world.”⁴² The paper's political orientation is liberal and centre-left.⁴³ The long term correspondent for Yugoslavia who also covered the war was Carl E. Buchalla.

The third German newspaper chosen for analysis is the *Tageszeitung* from Berlin. Unlike the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Tageszeitung* was a relatively new newspaper, having been established in April of 1979. The paper was conceived as an alternative news source that is “committed to social justice”, and has been linked with the Green Party of Germany, which make it a more left-leaning newspaper than the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.⁴⁴ The correspondent for Yugoslavia since the 1980s was Erich Rathfelder, who also covered Eastern Europe for the *Tageszeitung*. At the same time, *Tageszeitung* published essays and commentaries by the freelancer Dunja Melčić, a Croatian living in Germany since the 1970s, who arrived in Germany to study but continued living in Frankfurt after her studies. These three newspapers cover a wide political spectrum, representing the vast majority of popular political options in Germany.

For the Austrian newspapers used for analysis in this thesis I decided on *Die Presse* and *Der Standard*. Both newspapers are from Vienna and both are the only national quality dailies in Austria. *Die Presse*, according to their statute, represents a “bourgeois-liberal conception on

42 “Print Media - Newspapers and Magazines - Goethe-Institut,” accessed May 25, 2013, <http://www.goethe.de/wis/med/pnt/zuz/en556318.htm>.

43 While the state of Bavaria is traditionally the stronghold of the Christian Democratic Union's Bavarian sister party Christian Social Union, the city of Munich has been governed by the Social Democratic Party of Germany almost uninterrupted since the end of World War II.

44 <http://www.taz.de/zeitung/tazinfo/ueberuns-verlag/>.

an elevated level.”⁴⁵ In other words, *Die Presse* is firmly planted in the liberal tradition, going back to the revolution of 1848. The main journalist who wrote on Yugoslavia during this period was Maren Köster-Hetzendorf, who was *Die Presse*'s war correspondent, but editorials were written by Andreas Unterberger, the foreign news editor, and Peter Martos, the editor-in-chief.

Compared to *Die Presse*, *Der Standard* is a much younger newspaper, having been established in 1988. By 1990 it had grown into one of Austria's most widely read dailies, reaching an estimated audience of 175,000 readers.⁴⁶ In their official editorial policy they claim to be a “liberal medium,” one which advocates equality and reject any “extremism and totalitarianism.”⁴⁷ Although these postulates seem similar to those of *Die Presse*, *Der Standard* is more sympathetic to the centre-left side of the political spectrum. The Austrian print media landscape suffered the loss of its only socialist daily newspaper in 1990, when the Social Democratic Party of Austria's organ, the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, ceased to be published after years of financial losses, thus leaving the social democracy in Austria without a voice, or spread over other publications, including *Der Standard*.

1.5 Methodology

I approached my research by looking at all available issues of these five newspapers between January of 1990 until the end of January 1992. By doing so, I have parenthesised my research

45 “‘Die Presse’-Blattlinie,” *DiePresse.com*, accessed May 25, 2013, <http://diepresse.com/unternehmen/613276/Die-PresseBlattlinie>.

46 “DER STANDARD | Geschichte Des STANDARD,” accessed May 25, 2013, <http://derstandarddigital.at/1113535/Geschichte-des-STANDARD>.

47 “DER STANDARD | Blattlinie,” accessed May 25, 2013, <http://derstandarddigital.at/1113512/Blattlinie>.

period with the start of the democratisation in Yugoslavia and the international recognition of Croatia on the 15th of January 1992. I have looked at the editorial pieces, in-depth reports as well as opinion pieces, which dealt with Croatia, while omitting the remaining sections of the newspapers. The analysed texts were usually written by the editors and correspondents. Correspondents were usually based in one place, usually Belgrade, but covered all of Yugoslavia. On rare occasions there were opinion pieces written by guest commentators not affiliated with the editorial staff (op-eds) written on the subject. In the articles and stories selected, through a close reading, I will look for recurring themes and changes in themes, such as where the blame for the war is placed and how the opposing sides are represented, i.e. who is the victim and who the aggressor. I will search out frame characteristics mentioned earlier, as well. After establishing the frames in each newspaper, I will first compare them nationally, and then internationally. I expect to find that there was overwhelming pro-Croatian bias in both the Austrian and German press and that certain frames reinforced this bias.

2. The German Quality Daily Press on Croatia Between 1990 and 1992

In early 1990, the political focus of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), domestic as well as foreign, was firmly set on the process of German reunification between the FRG and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Initiated by the FRG's chancellor Helmut Kohl in November of the previous year, it provided context for the main themes for the German press during this period. The situation in GDR and the Soviet Union were reported on daily. Reporting on the unravelling of Communist regimes in other European countries was another major theme. Here the focus, not surprisingly, was on those countries where this process was well under way. In this respect, the reporting on Yugoslavia's democratisation was occurring with a delay and slowly. The vast majority of articles on Yugoslavia in the first few months of 1990 concentrated mostly on the ongoing crisis in Kosovo and the factional fighting within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, even though by that time political organizing outside the League was permitted and plans were already being made for multi-party elections. In the spring of the same year, however, as the League of Communist organizations in Slovenia and Croatia decided on election dates, the attention partially shifted to these two westernmost Yugoslav republics. After Slovenia's elections passed, the German newspapers' scrutiny turned towards Croatia.

2.1 Democratization and the first free elections in Croatia

The first free elections in Croatia on the 22nd and 23rd of April 1990 attracted some attention in the German press in the days prior, but rarely dealt with them beyond an informative aspect. The most in- depth report during the election campaign came from the conservative Frankfurt daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*'s Viktor Meier in early April. Meier offered a detailed look at the parties vying for the seats in the parliament. He included not only the major candidates' political histories and orientations as well as controversies surrounding them (such as top candidate Franjo Tuđman's statement that Bosnian Muslims were part of the Croatian nation), but also the possible implications of these candidates' victory in the election, especially in relation to the relatively large but somewhat divided Serb minority.⁴⁸ The Munich liberal daily, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also presented the forerunners a few days before the elections, claiming that Tuđman's nationalistic theses, which appealed to so many Croats, were not a singular occurrence on the young Croatian political scene. The Coalition of National Understanding, which was lead by the same politicians that lead the nationalist movement of 1971, “quietly thought what Tuđman was saying out loud.”⁴⁹

After the elections and Tuđman's Croatian Democratic Union's (HDZ) win, more attention was given to the repercussions this win might have upon the future of Yugoslavia. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* concluded that despite all the radical statements Tuđman made during the

48 Viktor Meier, “Frei sein in einem freiem Volk”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 6, 1990.

49 Carl E. Buchalla, “Titos Erben vor dem Bankrot”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 20, 1990.

election campaign, such as being “grateful to god that his wife was not Serbian or Jewish”, the Croatian population found no reason not to vote for him.⁵⁰ On the same day, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published their first editorial dealing with Croatia. The title of the editorial, “The Croats have had it especially tough”, is directed towards the suffering Croats endured under Communist rule.⁵¹ Reißmüller was one of the publishers of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* at the time who had a strong influence on the political stance of the newspaper and wrote many of the editorials concerning the war in Croatia. Reißmüller was known for being a staunch anti-Communist.⁵² It is therefore not surprising that he used his editorial to fiercely attack Yugoslav Communists for oppressing the Croats for almost half a century. Reißmüller traced this oppression back to World War II and a “revenge” on the Croats for forming a state under the auspices of Axis powers. This oversimplification was made worse by a selective interpretation of Yugoslav post-war history, painting a picture of a “permanent oppression” at the hands of “Serbs”, “Great Serbs” and the “Communists”, three terms which seemed to be interchangeable to the author. By doing so, Reißmüller framed the contemporary situation in Croatia within an “ancient hatreds” narrative. To be sure, this narrative was not Reißmüller's invention and was present in Croatia as well. As we will see, however, always accepted in the German press, but appeared repeatedly.

The Berlin daily *Tageszeitung* criticized the two major parties in their post-election analysis. HDZ and the reformed Communists supposedly presented crude and insincere programs. The author of the text, Dunja Melčić, writing from Frankfurt, stated that:

50 Carl E. Buchalla, “Franjo Tudjman Kroatiens neuer 'starker' Mann”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 26, 1990.

51 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Kroaten hatten es besonders schwer”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 26, 1990.

52 Matthias Kamann, “Kampfgesänge,” *Welt Online*, January 13, sec. Home, <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article497489/Kampfgesaenge.html>.

the program of the HDZ is as short as it is nondescript: it is 'Croatian'. The 'Croatian' economy and administration must be 'croatized'. 'Croatian' money must stay in Croatia. Wealthy 'Croatian' emigrants will finance the rebuilding of the 'Croatian' economy. The Serbian minority [...] must pledge itself to Croatia, and abortions must be banned so that there will be once more 'Croatian' children.⁵³

The reformed Communists, on the other hand, are shown as a party that abused its position of power during the election campaign, but lost all credibility due to its inability to present and set in motion “steps for the democratization of institutions or the most banal constitutional questions (in relation to Yugoslavia, for example).”⁵⁴ What all three newspapers' views of the elections had in common was the appraisal of the undoubtedly nationalistic tone of Tuđman's HDZ and the power it seemed to wield in post-communists Croatia on one hand, and the powerlessness of the former rulers, who were quickly becoming obsolete and irrelevant. After the elections, the ethnic strife between Croats and Serbs began to escalate, and here the German newspapers found more common ground.

In July of 1990, the Croatian parliament, Sabor, made amendments to the Croatian constitution which effectively made it a nation state. The Serbs, living mostly in the Krajina area along the Croatian-Bosnian border and organized into a Serbian National Council, denounced these changes and proclaimed their autonomy. This proclamation was to be confirmed by way of referendum, to be held in August. The Croatian government decided to prevent the referendum from taking place by sending a strong police contingent to break it up. The police were themselves prevented from reaching the Serb populated regions by blocked roads and railway tracks. The “Log Revolution”, named after the most popular material used for

53 Dunja Melcic and Rino Miculic, “Vorwärts in die Vergangenheit”, *Tageszeitung* April 30, 1990.

54 Ibid.

the diversions, united the German press to place the blame upon the Serbian camp.

The *Tageszeitung* saw the problem not in the fact that changes which were under way in Croatia made the Serbian population uneasy, but in the unwillingness of the Serbian leadership to take part in the democratic processes and institutions.⁵⁵ As for the rumours that the Belgrade government might be behind the Croatian Serbs' actions in order to provoke a conflict which would be cause for an army intervention, the author believes that even though the rumours should not be dismissed, an intervention is highly unlikely. Even though incidents continued to occur after the referendum, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that Croats feel stronger after the “failed rebellion”, while the real problem lies in the role of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA).⁵⁶ Unlike Melcic, Meier recognized that the YPA would play an important part in the Yugoslav crisis, which in itself is a very logical conclusion, given the YPA's position in the Yugoslav political order. Interestingly enough, the article was accompanied by a cartoon of a man dressed in traditional Serbian attire and 'Serbia' written on his cumerbund, with what can be only described as an evil and sadistic smile. He is holding a sign that calls for autonomy in Croatia, while at the same time his right foot is on the back of a kneeling Albanian holding a sign calling for autonomy in Kosovo.⁵⁷ The cartoon is important because it shows the shifting of themes in the reporting on Yugoslavia, with Kosovo slowly being relegated to the less relevant news stories.

About a month after the Log Revolution, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a full page report titled “The Old Demon Poisons the Souls”. The report dealt with the current ethnic divisions in Yugoslavia, but was seeped in the “ancient hatreds” narrative, looking for the

⁵⁵ Dunja Melcic, “Serben in Kroatien auf Konfrontationskurs”, *Tageszeitung* August 20, 1990.

⁵⁶ Viktor Meier, “Kroatien fühlt sich nach dem mißglückten Aufstand in Knin gestärkt”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 1990.

⁵⁷ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 1990.

causes of the conflicts in the past, especially in World War II. This is compounded by an exaggerated number of Serbs killed by the fascist puppet regime in Croatia.⁵⁸ The German press, much as the press in the Yugoslav republics, seemed to be conditioning their readerships for a war.

Whether there actually was a war going on in Yugoslavia was a question Reißmüller asked in the title of his October 5th editorial. Reißmüller answers his own question with a 'no', but notes that it definitely reeks of war.⁵⁹ The YPA and the armed Serb minority, Reißmüller continues, would have an easy task of defeating the police forces loyal to the Croatian government, especially given the long border with Serbia.⁶⁰ He notes that the aggressive posturing of the Yugoslav government could be curtailed if the Western powers cautioned Belgrade with sanctions. This is significant because it is the first time any of the three analysed newspapers called for an intervention by the Western governments. The disproportionately large number of YPA officers who were Serbs seemed to be a point of interest in a couple more articles in the German press in October. The cause for this interest was not events in Croatia, which was experiencing a relatively quiet period after the developments in August, but rather those in the neighbouring Slovenia.⁶¹ *Tageszeitung* called the YPA intervention in Slovenia “operetta-like”, considering that they opted not to intervene in Croatia, where paramilitary units patrolled the streets of Serb populated areas, openly defying the legitimate rule in that republic.⁶² On October 8th, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a cartoon showing a moustachioed

58 Olaf Ihlau, “Der alte Dämon vergiftet die Seelen”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 25, 1990.

59 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Gibt es in Jugoslawien Krieg?”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 5, 1990.

60 Croatia's border with Serbia is not very long. Her borders to Slovenia, Hungary and Bosnia-Herzegovina are all much longer. It is possible that Reißmüller equates all of Croatia's eastern borders to that with Serbia.

61 Slovenian government had made a decision to put the territorial defense units on Slovenian territory under a civil command, a decision which prompted an intervention by the YPA, which included the takeover of the territorial defense headquarters in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana.

62 Dunja Melcic, “Operettenhafte Intervention”, *Tageszeitung*, October 6, 1990.

Yugoslav soldier with scissors in his hand, his body cut into pieces. Two of those pieces are labelled 'Slovenia' and 'Croatia', implying that it is in fact the Army which is the destructive factor in Yugoslav politics, rather than being the linchpin of Yugoslav federalism.⁶³ Two days later, *Süddeutsche Zeitung's* Belgrade correspondent Carl E. Buchalla declared that an “open conflict is imminent,” and that the YPA, Serbian domination notwithstanding, will split along ethnic lines in the same way as Yugoslavia.⁶⁴ On October 15th, Viktor Meier, wrote that despite the inability of the YPA command to change in the spirit of democracy, there is still a reluctance to act outside the constitution. That there are several sides in the republics with varying conceptions of the army's future role, does little to help the situation. Meier, however, ruled out a possibility of a coup d'etat. Like Buchalla, he believed that in a time of extreme crisis, the army would fall apart due to a lack of ethnic homogeneity.⁶⁵

The time of extreme crisis was approaching fast. By December, the German newspapers were considering the chances of Yugoslavia's survival, stirred by the signing into law of a new Croatian constitution. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* saw that an agreement between the republics on establishing a new political structure of the federation was highly unlikely, given the extremely disparate election results in Slovenia and Croatia to those in the eastern republics.⁶⁶ The only way out is a reform that would allow the republics to acquire more rights which would then help them explore their national identities.⁶⁷ Anything else would lead to a civil war, or a war of the army against the citizens.⁶⁸ Going even further, Reißmüller wrote in his editorial of the

63 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 8, 1990.

64 Carl E. Buchalla, “Der offene Konflikt steht bevor”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 10, 1990.

65 Viktor Meier, “Weshalb der Armee Jugoslawiens das Putschen schwerfällt”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 15, 1990.

66 Josef Riedmiller, “Jugoslawiens spaltung wird tiefer”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 27, 1990.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

December 27th issue of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that even though Croatia is willing to transform Yugoslavia into a more loose federation, Serbia and the YPA are the ones blocking any chance of progress. What is left is the prospect of a crumbling of Yugoslavia into small states, which Reißmüller finds more than likely, because “only those nations that live in freedom and under law can thrivingly come together in larger entity.”⁶⁹ By the end of 1990, the newspapers agreed that the Yugoslav republics will not live in peace.

2.2 The Role of the Yugoslav People's Army: Overture to War

On February 22nd of 1991 the Croatian parliament voted to leave Yugoslavia in its present state, but left an open possibility of reforming it into a confederation. In the build up to the vote, Viktor Meier reported on the situation in the Krajina region. He talked to the local Serb representatives and came to the conclusion that “the Serbs' fear often seems to be a fear of losing privileges.”⁷⁰ He writes that the government in Zagreb wants the Serbs to be reasonable, while the Serbs want the government to show understanding.⁷¹ At the same time both the local authorities and the Zagreb government are taking measures to undermine each other, which makes the outlook for an agreement of some sorts highly unlikely.⁷² Meier's report was one of the handful of articles which dealt with the Serbian side in Croatia and the first in depth report on Croatian Serbs during this period. As the tensions grew in the following weeks, balanced

69 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Wenn Jugoslawien zerfällt”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 27, 1990.

70 Viktor Meier, “Ertasten was Vernunft sein soll”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 2, 1991.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

reporting in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* would all but disappear.

Just two weeks later, Johann Georg Reißmüller reported from the multiethnic Croatian town of Virovitica. Unlike Meier, Reißmüller reports on the terror the Croatian population was experiencing. The perpetrator is the Serbian minority, which numbers around 17 percent, and according to the article:

The Serbs, military personnel and civilians alike, behave masterly. One always felt this, but now they are stoking the fire. The KOS agents, army officers and Belgrade journalists, one could hear from the gathered Croats, have spread [rumours] that the Serbs are endangered by Croat Fascists. As a consequence the army officers have taken their wives and children out of Virovitica and sent them to Serbia. Armed civilian patrols roam about. The army distributed truckloads of arms to the Serbian population. It is a Serbian army that the Croats are dealing with here.⁷³

Comparing Meier's article to that of Reißmüller clearly shows that the sense of balance, in *FAZ* at least, has been discarded. A couple of days later, Reißmüller filed a report from Zagreb, asking if the YPA is about to strike, despite the peaceful intentions of the Croatian leadership, but at the same time hinting that Croats might be purchasing weapons and preparing for a fight.⁷⁴ In an editorial published on the 26th of February, Reißmüller accused the Serbs of suffering from a “master race mania”, much as the Germans suffered from it under Hitler, and which “brought horrible misery unto other nations.”⁷⁵ The similarity of events was not meant solely as a warning to Serbs, but also to encourage the German leadership not to sit idly while the crisis in Yugoslavia was escalating.⁷⁶ Reißmüller's calls for action fell did not have the

73 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Sie können sich nicht vorstellen, was hier los ist. Wir leben wie in einem Irrenhaus”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 19, 1991.

74 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Weg von Jugoslawien”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 23, 1991.

75 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Herrenvolk Verblendung”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 26, 1991.

76 Ibid.

desired effect. The passivity of Germany showed that the fighting came sooner than expected and surprised German politicians, illustrated by the fact they held their first “current hour”⁷⁷ on Yugoslavia only in late February.⁷⁸

In March of the same year, the first open conflicts between the Croatian police and the rebel Serb forces began. Croatian special police forces clashed with Serbian paramilitary units at the Plitvice national park, at the edge of the Krajina region. The YPA stepped in to form a buffer zone between the two belligerent sides, but because they gave an ultimatum to the Croatian police to withdraw from the area, they effectively sided with the rebels. The participation of the army opened a new angle in the reporting, hinted at throughout the previous year. By this time, the YPA's name began to be written in inverted commas in all three German newspapers, another sure sign of pro-Croatian bias. Back on the 1st of March, Reißmüller reminded his readership that the YPA bears as much responsibility for the failure of Yugoslavia as much as the Serbian political leadership, failing to mention Tuđman's own nationalistic rhetoric.⁷⁹ The following day, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a cartoon depicting a toppled statue of an army officer holding a rifle. A man representing Serbia is holding up the giant rifle and pointing it towards two men representing Slovenia and Croatia. The caption under the cartoon reads “Stop in the name of the unbreakable unity of our country!”⁸⁰ On the 22nd of March, another editorial by Johann Georg Reißmüller explained that “violence is a common instrument of rule in Yugoslavia”, and cynically pointed out that calls for a peaceful solution now sound the same way a similar call would have been made to the remnants of

77 “Current hour” (Aktuelle Stunde) is a parliamentary session of the German Bundestag where its members discuss a current issue, usually through a Q&A with the prime minister or other cabinet members.

78 Aktuelle Stunde zu Jugoslawien”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 22, 1991.

79 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Der Feind steht drinnen”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 1, 1991.

80 P. Leger, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 7, 1991.

Czechoslovakia and Germany in the March of 1939.⁸¹ A report from Krajina was published in the *Tageszeitung* the next day, the last one from this region in this newspaper during the period researched in this thesis. It was an attempt to give an objective account on the life on the other side, which indicates who the *Tageszeitung* thought was on *this side*.⁸² That a war was inevitable was clear even to the casual observer, but, again, the German press was clearly pointing the finger at only one side.

2.3 Media Symbols of the War

After Slovenia's short war against the YPA ended on July 7th, the YPA retreated back to Croatia. Within a month it had begun open military operations against Croatia, occupying parts of its territory and blocking vital roads around several cities. Already on July 22nd, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a reported describing the situation in the eastern part of Slavonia.⁸³ Unlike the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* or the *Tageszeitung* at this point in the conflict, this *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article still tried to give accounts from both sides in Croatia. In his report, among other topics, Egon Scotland wrote about the case of Josip Reihl-Kir, a Croatian police commander who was killed while trying to negotiate a ceasefire in one of the Slavonian villages. The case was controversial because Reihl-Kir's murder was believed to be ordered by some of president Tudman's closest advisers, including the then current minister of defence, Gojko Šušak. Due to the nature of the case and the implications it had for the official

81 Johann Georg Reißmüller, "Ein Staat des Unheils", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 22, 1991.

82 Erich Rathfelder, "Wie eine Babuschka-Puppe", *Tageszeitung*, March 23, 1991.

83 Egon Scotland, "Eine Dorfstraße, nur noch ein Kriegspfad", *Tageszeitung*, July 22, 1991.

Croatian narrative of victimization at the hands of Serbs, it was not reported on in Croatian press, nor investigated by Croatian police. Scotland's inclusion of this case is a rare example of balanced reporting at a time where the sides have been chosen by other German reporters and their editors. Sadly, only a few days after filing his report, Scotland would become one of the first journalists killed during this war.⁸⁴

On August 5th, Johann Georg Reißmüller wrote that “every war is bloody. But the one now being fought against the Croats goes well beyond the acts of war allowed under norms of law and morality. Above all, it is the great-Serbian chetniks who are performing methodological bestial atrocities.”⁸⁵ It was highly unlikely that a war which had only started in earnest a few weeks before this article was published had surpassed any previous war in the scale of atrocities committed. In addition, Reißmüller began using the term 'chetnik' as a blanket term for all members of Serbian paramilitary units. This term, which is loaded with the legacy of World War II Serbian paramilitary forces who collaborated with German and Italian occupiers and committed crimes against Croats, further fuelled the “ancient hatreds” theory of Balkan conflicts, effectively making it the frame for this period of the war in Croatia. The heavy fighting which continued throughout the autumn and winter of 1991 gave more fodder to this theory.

The rapid advance of Serbian troops caused massive waves of refugees. The *Tageszeitung* published a report on the plight of those forced to leave their homes. And even though the subtitle claimed that there were at that point over 260,000 refugees in Yugoslavia, the

84 “Gefährliche Kriegsberichterstattung - Zum Tod von Egon Scotland Vor 20 Jahren | Europa Heute | Deutschlandfunk,” accessed May 23, 2013, <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/europaheute/1513293/>.

85 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Folter und Mord an Polizisten, Zivilisten als lebende Schutzschilde”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 5, 1991.

refugees interviewed for the report include Croats only.⁸⁶ Schmid included a handful of verbatim quotes by the interviewees, and they mostly referred to the Serbs through accusations:

“*Serben, alles Scheiße!*”⁸⁷

“The chetniks, but those are the Serbs, the neighbours, with whom we always lived with in peace! They attacked us at night, sacked our homes and set them on fire and forced us to flee, or looked on as the slaughtered our livestock.”

“[an expression] of the lower culture of the Serbs.”⁸⁸

A similar account on Serb refugees was not published in the *Tageszeitung*, nor in the other newspapers.

After the fall of Vukovar, Reißmüller warned of the fate of Croats who were captured by the Serbs, stating that “now it is of the utmost importance to save all Croats left in Vukavar (sic!), civilians as well as soldiers. Because those who fall in Serbian hands are in danger of being tortured and murdered.”⁸⁹ *Tageszeitung*'s Dunja Melčić also lamented the unnecessary nature of the fall of Vukovar, “which *was* a Croatian town on the Danube in which 20 ethnic groups used to live”, and the uncertain future of its defenders and inhabitants:

the town is of little strategic importance, whichever goal the [Yugoslav People's] Army may choose. If the generals' goal is to bring down the “Ustasha government in Zagreb”, then they have taken a pointless detour that cost countless human lives. Even if it was about conquering Slavonia, it was still pointless to do it by conquering a strategically unimportant town. The motives for their actions lie rather in a campaign of vengeance, which has assumed a life of its own during the fighting. The population living in their cellars and sewage tunnels is rightfully

86 Thomas Schmid, “Von den serbischen Nachbarn vertrieben”, *Tageszeitung*, October 22, 1991.

87 “Serbs, all shit!” (the interviewee spoke German).

88 Thomas Schmid, “Von den serbischen Nachbarn vertrieben”, *Tageszeitung*, October 22, 1991.

89 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Nach dem Fall”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 19, 1991.

afraid of the threatening massacre by the Serbian paramilitary troops. Indescribable atrocities have already been committed upon the civil population in the surrounding villages. The perpetrators would do anything to stop the EC observers from surveying the crime sites.⁹⁰

The image of the civilian suffering after the fall of Vukovar was further reinforced in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on November 21st, when the newspaper published a photo of a smiling YPA soldier turning over a presumably dead body with his foot, with another uniformed person wearing a *šajkača*, a traditional Serbian hat, going through the dead persons pockets.⁹¹ The tragedy of Vukovar, while not being a subject of much coverage in German quality newspapers, did seem to bring Croatia's plight further into the spotlight and highlighted the need for international aid, in various guises. The article beneath the photo included news of United States humanitarian aid in the form of food, a donation drive organized by the state of Bavaria, the local catholic church and social welfare organisations for the acquisition of ambulances and more than 35,000 Croatian refugees in Hungary.⁹² But perhaps most importantly, it was shown as the last call for an international intervention, lest a humanitarian disaster was to be averted. On November 27th, Georg Paul Hefty, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's* Hungary expert,⁹³ wrote that day's editorial, "The Border Must Be Secured," in which he stressed the importance of keeping the internal federal borders of Yugoslavia's republics intact. More importantly, however, he writes that:

90 Dunja Melcic, "Vukovar, mon amour!", *Tageszeitung*, November 19, 1991.

91 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 21, 1991.

92 F.A.Z., "Nach dem Fall Vukovars viele auf der Flucht", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 21, 1991.

93 Interestingly, the *Tageszeitung* wrote of Hefty's role at the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: "Georg Paul Hefty is a sort of a CDU resident in the Hellernhof street, the newspaper's headquarters. He knows everyone at the CDU, knows everything about the CDU, defends everything in the CDU. When he writes, the *FAZ* becomes the *Pravda*. *Tageszeitung*, April 7, 2000.

In a case of a crime, one can observe it unaffected only from a distance; if near, one must either look away or or come to the victim's aid. This natural human reflex may be an explanation as to why, during Serbian assault on Croatia, it was the states Austria, Hungary and Germany who took a position before Great Britain, the United States and others. The proximity might also explain that the former differentiate between perpetrator and victim. Only on one point are the ones far away superior: it is generally they who insist on the upholding of principles, while those near are usually concerned with keeping the peace But looking at Serbia's war against Croats, this rule seems to be curiously suspended.⁹⁴

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also reflected on the absurdity of the international community's inefficiency. In a cartoon, they showed three unkempt Serbian soldiers. One was shooting down doves carrying olive branches in their beaks, while the other two were roasting several the ones already caught on a skewer. There were 14 dead doves, symbolising the 14 broken ceasefires up till that point.⁹⁵ The continuous depiction of Serbs as uncontrollable, hateful aggressors in the media resulted in a severe backlash against the Germans in Serbia, which seemed to have drawn them into an “ancient hatreds” story of their own. Buchalla cites the Yugoslav defence minister Kadijević who accused Germany of wanting to break up Yugoslavia for the third time after 1914 (sic!) and 1941.⁹⁶ Buchalla reported from Belgrade about the demonstration against “German fascism” with banners calling for a “liquidation” of Genscher, and where swastika covered portraits of Kohl were ripped to pieces.⁹⁷

The ongoing atrocities were putting the role of the European Community's crisis management into question, as well as Germany's role in in their effort to solve the crisis in former Yugoslavia.

94 Georg Paul Hefty, “Die Grenze ist zu Sichern”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 27, 1991.

95 E. M. Lang, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 30/December 1, 1991, p. 4.

96 Carl E. Buchalla, “Auferweckung des alten Feindes”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 30/December 1, 1991.

97 Ibid.

2.4 International Recognition of Croatia

In the aftermath of Dubrovnik and Vukovar the *Tageszeitung* published an op-ed by the Slovenian philosopher Rado Riha.⁹⁸ In his text, Riha accused the countries of the European Community for trampling their ideal of European universalism by excluding those who suffer from “Yugoslavian nationalisms.”⁹⁹

Another op-ed was published by the *Tageszeitung* on November 28th, authored by Klaus Dicke, a board member of the German Society for the United Nations.¹⁰⁰ He agreed that it's becoming “less and less understandable” as to why the UN troops have not already been deployed to Croatia, but also raised a question of why Germany seems to be backing out of participating in the probable UN peace keeping mission. The question of Germany's involvement would be brought up again in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* a couple of weeks later. On December 7th, after Tuđman's visit to Germany and meeting with Kohl, Reißmüller wrote an editorial piece in which he took a similar position to Dicke, assuring the readers that

only military help can save Croatia. Those who suppress this, are lying to themselves. But the “free world” has brought this to perfection in the face of the Serbian war against Croatia. It ignores what it is all about, talks instead of minor matters. For example, about the economic sanctions of the EC against Serbia that cannot be taken seriously. An irresponsible policy.¹⁰¹

98 Rado Riha, “Das böse im Blick”, *Tageszeitung*, November 29, 1991.

99 Ibid.

100 This is a non-governmental organization which “strives to inform the German public in an impartial and critical manner about the aims, institutions and activities of the United Nations. It intends to increase interest in and awareness of current events in foreign and development policy, in cultural and world economic policy as well as in international relations and developments in general.” “DGVN: About Us - Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Die Vereinten Nationen e.V.,” accessed May 27, 2013, http://www.dgvn.de/about_us.html.

101 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Absurd”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 7, 1991.

The need for a UN peace keeping mission was brought up again in the *Tageszeitung* on December 9th, and the possible difficulties of UN troops deployment, but this time the problem was not the indecisive international community, but rather the instability of the various armed forces in Croatia, both Serbian and Croatian, as well as renegade YPA units in the neighbouring republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, from where they were also attacking Croatia.¹⁰²

The call for more involvement from the international community in the editorial was juxtaposed with the support of Helmut Kohl's government's reluctance to help Croatia with weapons. Reißmüller explains this by the sensitive situation Germany finds herself in, not in relation to Belgrade, which had been accusing Bonn of actively undermining Yugoslavia's sovereignty for months, but rather in relation to other European countries.¹⁰³ This peculiar stance, one where the journalist demands action, just not from his government, was offset by another editorial. This time the author was Georg Paul Hefty, who claimed that the German government was acting in a timely fashion when they asked for a expeditious recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.¹⁰⁴ Hefty stated that:

both the EC and the United Nations have surrendered initiative to the aggressor Serbia and her military extension, the People's Army and the bands of Chetniks. These alone hold foreign territory under occupation, decide on the intensity of fighting and the stability of the truce. On top of that, the United Nations have now ceded the right to decide when the UN peace keeping forces should intervene and secure the Serbian military's winter break.¹⁰⁵

102 Thomas Schmid, "Jugoslawiens viele fronten", *Tageszeitung*, December 9, 1991.

103 Ibid.

104 Georg Paul Hefty, "Bonn handelt nicht vorzeitig", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 16, 1991.

105 Ibid.

Hefty's editorial came on the day of the summit meeting of the EC foreign affairs ministers in Brussels, where Germany pursued her policy of recognition. The next day the results of the meeting became known, including the multi-layered recognition procedure to be followed by EC states and Yugoslav republics seeking international recognition. Another editorial by Reißmüller reacted to the complex conditions set upon the republics, such as the ability to vouch for its “borders, minority rights, human rights and democracy.”¹⁰⁶ Reißmüller declared that even though it is a positive sign that the EC has finally taken a position which favours the independence-seeking republics, such conditions are pointless because both Slovenia and Croatia have been dragged into a war exactly because of the desire to be democratic countries, with all the components such a system entails.¹⁰⁷ *Tageszeitung* mirrored the mixed sentiments after the summit meeting.¹⁰⁸ The comment's author, Thomas Schmid, claimed that since both the British foreign minister Douglas Hurd and his German counterpart Hans-Dietrich Genscher hailed the summit's conclusions as a success, that it was in fact a “compromise with a foul odour.”¹⁰⁹ But unlike Reißmüller, Schmid advised a “diplomatic equidistance“ to all Yugoslav republics, an approach that would keep outside aggravation on the region to a minimum.¹¹⁰ Reißmüller, on the other hand, continued with his relentless charge against EC's policy towards Croatia, recent positive trends notwithstanding. On the same day as Schmid's commentary, Reißmüller took it upon himself to reiterate all the “absurdities Western politics have committed in the face of this catastrophe,” adding that it would be hard for them to add new ones.¹¹¹ This summed up the catastrophic results of the EC's role in the war in the concluding paragraph:

106 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Anerkennungs-Kampf”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 18, 1991.

107 Ibid.

108 Thomas Schmid, “Kompromiß mit faulem Geruch”, *Tageszeitung*, December 18, 1991.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Absurditäten statt Politik”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 18, 1991.

The EC took too much time. It always thought up a new pointless conference, an unachievable pre-requirement, a later date. The Croats, however, waited despairingly for the West to help them out their misery. They cannot understand that so many statesmen, whom they put faith in, apparently believed that absurdities make a responsible policy.¹¹²

In comparison to his editorial published on December 7th, Reißmüller changed his wording slightly, but by using the terms “absurdity” and “responsibility” he repeated the message that it was the European Community as a whole which failed Croatia. By this time, it was announced that Germany would recognize Croatia and Slovenia before Christmas. Accordingly, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a cartoon depicting chancellor Kohl as Santa Clause bringing the Christmas gift of recognition to the charred ruins presumably representing Croatia.¹¹³ The day after Germany recognized Croatia, the 24th of December, Reißmüller wrote another editorial in which he praised Germany and her efforts to try and convince other EC countries that recognition of Croatia and Slovenia is the only legitimate decision. He reminded the readers of the “animosity” the EC showed towards these two republics, ending with mournful statement that Croats, even in their “deepest misery have faith in the Western world, which does not deserve it.”¹¹⁴ The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also criticized the West in a cartoon depicting European leaders, including Kohl, standing around a bonfire next to a Christmas tree and singing carols, while on the other side of the tree Serbian soldiers were setting the Christmas tree on fire.¹¹⁵

The EC decision to wait until the 15th of January to recognize Slovenia and Croatia did seem to aggravate these German newspapers, but in the face of a set date and an almost certain

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 21, 1991.

¹¹⁴ Johann Georg Reißmüller, “Anerkannt”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 24, 1991.

¹¹⁵ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 24/25/26, 1991 p. 4.

positive result for these two republics on that date, it left them without fodder. On the 15th of January, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a full page report on the situation in Croatia, calling it “between war and limbo.”¹¹⁶ The author, Peter Sartorius, wrote a report which had the usual themes of a suffering, “bleeding” country. He also included statements by several local Serb representatives, including an Serb-Orthodox priest who accused the Croatian government of using Serbs who remained loyal to the government as cannon fodder. Sartorius also ironically described president Tudman's guards, who, “in their red flamboyant uniforms from the age of hussars” gave the president's palace an “air of absurdity.”¹¹⁷ Just a few months prior, the inclusion of such examples of life in Croatia would have been hard to even imagine, let alone publish. The somewhat critical tone of the article was one of the early signs that pro-Croat bias was slowly losing its primacy and that Croatia's political situation was open to discussion. On the same day, *Tageszeitung*'s Eric Rathfelder summarised the last two years of Germany's Yugoslav policy as well as the role of the international community, whose ignorance on the issue was “astonishing.”¹¹⁸ The biggest problem of the debate was the “seeming resurrection of old constellations. It is not surprising, then, when the Serbian propaganda tries to mobilise its soldiers and also drive a wedge between Western states and Germany with the bogey of a coalition between the Croatian 'Ustasha state' and the 'Fourth Reich.’”¹¹⁹ Rathfelder recommended that Germany's critics must push aside such allegations and look towards improving the mechanisms of conflict resolution, something which proved to be severely lacking and was subject to “instrumentalisation by single states”, as was the case with the

116 Peter Sartorius, “Wenn die Logik zum Verbündeten wird”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 15, p. 3.

117 Ibid.

118 Eric Rathfelder, “Deutsche Außenpolitik im Regen”, *Tageszeitung*, January 15, 1991.

119 Ibid.

United States in the United Nations during the Gulf War.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Ibid.

3. The Austrian Quality Daily Press on Croatia Between 1990 and 1992

3.1 Democratisation and the First Free Elections in Croatia

Austrian newspapers followed the political changes in Yugoslavia with the same interest with which they followed political changes in Eastern Europe. This means that they focused on each of these countries as this changes took place. In the case of Croatia, this occurred in April of 1990 with the staging of the first free elections. Even though there were no editorials or opinion pieces concerning the future of Austrian-Yugoslav relations or the position of Austrian politicians towards Yugoslavia's democratization, in light of relatively rapid changes which were occurring in the region, *Der Standard* went as far as to interview Alexander Sixtus von Reden, an Austrian expert on the Austro-Hungarian period and a monarchist, and by no means a relevant player in the world of Austrian politics. Von Reden entertained the notion of a formation of a “Danube confederacy,” which by all accounts alluded to the resurrection of Austrian-Hungary.¹²¹ This article was an outlier of sorts, but it was indicative of the perceived vagueness of the future of the region in the Austrian press.

In the run-up to the elections, as was also the case in the German press coverage of the elections, it was necessary to give a short overview of Croatia's history, an explanation of the democratic process taking place and to present the top candidates. The prevalent message in *Die Presse's* articles was that nationalistic rhetoric seemed to have the best response among

¹²¹ Alexander Sixtus von Reden, “Donaukönfederation jetzt!”, *Der Standard*, April 14/15/16 1990.

Croatian voters, especially when promises such as “rebuilding Croatia in her natural borders” and making Croats “the masters in their own country” were given.¹²² Interestingly enough, *Die Presse* further investigated the positions of major Croatian parties just prior to the first round of voting, all except the leading party, Franjo Tuđman's Croatian Democratic Union, but which was labelled “ultranationalist” in passing.¹²³ The report, with the subheading “Nationalism is the Trump Card for the New Parties,” did not in fact deal with the rise of nationalism in Croatian politics, but focused on individual party leaders, as well as the legacy of communism, including within the reformed communist party. The Party of Democratic Change, as they were known at that point, would have problems winning over voters despite a “young team of men and women,” because:

[t]he people of Croatia see the decades of mismanagement of the economy, corruption and repression of any impulse of freedom. The democratisation has, as all interviews have shown, freed the minds of the people.¹²⁴

Der Standard chose to reflect on the tensions during the campaign, citing vulgar arguments between candidates, tearing down of election posters and a banning of an opposition party's final rally before the election day as evidence.¹²⁵ After the Croatian Democratic Union's victory in the first round, *Die Presse* and *Der Standard* profiled the party's president, Tuđman. *Der Standard* juxtaposed his roots as the youngest general in Tito's partisan army during World War II with the nationalistic ideas he propagated during the election campaign.¹²⁶ *Die Presse* also

122 Maren Kötzer-Hetzendorf, “Nationakroaten auf dem Vormarsch”, *Die Presse*, April 2, 1990.

123 Maren Kötzer-Hetzendorf, “Ich sehe nur Kroaten vor mir”, *Die Presse*, April 21/22, 1990.

124 Ibid.

125 Ulrike Rudberg, “Eine Wahlschlacht mit Untergriffen”, *Der Standard*, April 21/22, 1990.

126 Inge Bacher-Dalma, “Kopf des Tages: Die Galionsfigur Kroatiens kommt aus Titos Armee”, April 24, 1990.

touched on Tuđman's communist past, albeit ludicrously connecting his party's good logistics at home and abroad to the skills he acquired in the partisans.¹²⁷ Kötzer-Hetzendorf did make an important point, about Croatia's future, however, when she wrote that:

[t]here are above all national disputes which have to be overcome. Tuđman's party has to build up a new, relaxed relationship with the Serbian minority. A modern social state cannot be built up with 19th century nationalistic relics.¹²⁸

During this period, it seemed that the Austrian quality daily press focused more on the democratic changes in Yugoslavia in the same way they covered other countries in the region. The potential nationalistic conflict were either totally overlooked or insufficiently covered. Kötzer-Hetzendorf's editorial was an exception. The number of articles which dealt with Croatia did not outnumber other topics either, in fact, their number dwindled after the elections, with sporadic reports coming from the region. However, Maren Kötzer-Hetzendorf opened her July 16th editorial titled "Fear of Explosion in the Balkans" with a sentence which contrasts starkly with the relatively optimistic texts published just a few months earlier:

Ethnic conflicts, bloody street battles, chauvinist outbursts, cravings for territorial expansion: Ever since - almost - all countries of southeast Europe have shed away communist regimes there is no peace in the Balkans¹²⁹

Even though the article does not explicitly mention Croatia, but the inclusion of the "question of the 'internal borders' in Yugoslavia" as one of the most dangerous potential conflict triggers suggests that the focus on Yugoslavia was turning away from the framing the stories from

127 Maren Kötzer-Hetzendorf, "Demokratie-Frühling in Jugoslawien", *Die Presse*, April 27, 1990.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

Yugoslavia as a 'post-communist transition' into 'ethnic conflict'.

3.2 Symbols of Destruction

The two most symbolic sites of the war in Croatia were without a doubt Vukovar and Dubrovnik. As early as October, *Der Standard* reported on the “dramatic cries for help from Vukovar.”¹³⁰ Shelling of Dubrovnik was at that point, however, a more covered topic. On November 14th, Köster-Hetzendorf reported from the besieged city on the Adriatic. The title of the article, “We Are Living Like Animals, Without Water, Without Bread” encapsulates not only the message of the article but also of the news coming from Croatia in the last months of 1991. Köster-Hetzendorf wrote of the humanitarian catastrophe threatening the city:

Everyone from a three month old baby to the 98 year old woman have spent the night on the hard, dusty floor of an air raid shelter in the centre of Dubrovnik. Most of them have not left the cellar for days. ... Food has become scarce. This is because since the largest bakery in the city was destroyed by shelling at the beginning of the week, not enough bread is being made. Drinkable water has also become scarce in the last few days. Since the constant shelling began on Friday the [Croatian] Army and the Navy have not been able to distribute any. “We're living like animals,” says a young girl with tears in her eyes.

The people in the cellars are nervous wrecks. Many just stare apathetically in front of themselves. They do not even feel hunger any more. “We are just endlessly tired,” says a mother, rocking her daughter to sleep. The life in the city, once dubbed “the pearl of the Adriatic,” has become a living nightmare.¹³¹

The suffering of the civilians was coupled with the destruction of cultural landmarks. Köster-Hetzendorf quotes Phil Davison, the Guardian correspondent who was also in Dubrovnik,

130 Zdzislaw P. Gwozdz, „Dramatischer Hilferuf aus der eingekesselter Grenzstadt Vukovar“, *Der Standard*, October 2, 1991.

131 Maren Kötzer-Hetzendorf, “Wir leben wie die Tiere, ohne Wasser, ohne Brot,” *Die Presse*, November 14, 1991.

claiming that it “reminded him of Beirut.”¹³² Köster-Hetzendorf continued:

From the old town to the harbor there are scenes of devastation. Charred cars line the streets. The asphalt is littered with pieces of broken glass and loads of bullet casings. Most of the houses are destroyed. A Soviet-built rocket has hit the 14th century St. John's tower. Shells have also damaged the 16th century Sponza palace. In it are kept books and documents dating back to the early Medieval period.¹³³

The juxtaposition of the destruction of centuries old cultural landmarks and the human suffering with the brutal and destructive force of the Serbs and their “Soviet-built” rockets goes along the lines of reporting on Dubrovnik found in the British press, where the criteria for objective reporting have been discarded in lieu of “cheerleading” for the victims.¹³⁴ Vukovar was also subject to this treatment after the city fell to the YPA and Serbian militias, but never to the same extent. The human suffering and the cultural devastation frame was reinforced on the 20th of November, when *Der Standard* published a letter by the Croatian intellectual Slobodan Lang titled “Last Call For Help to the Human Kind,” in which he claimed that:

The aggressors have badly damaged the foundations of our culture in these decisive days of Croatia's future. With the destruction of Dubrovnik, the cradle of our culture, they have destroyed our freedom, that has persisted since the 14th century. We are facing a horrific fact, that 60,000 city inhabitants could be massacred in the next few hours.¹³⁵

Lang, a descendant of a patrician Dubrovnik family could be forgiven for writing such an alarmist letter, especially given the fact that Vukovar fell just two days earlier, but the main

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Pearson.

135 Slobodan Lang, “Letzter Hilferuf und die Menschheit,” *Der Standard*, November 20, 1991.

points of his letter differ only slightly to Köster-Hetzendorf's report. Just two weeks later, *Die Presse* published another article concerning the damage inflicted to cultural landmarks, above all to Dubrovnik's ancient walls. According to the Croatian deputy minister of culture Slobodan Novak, the city walls have been shelled for 24 hours straight, the result being a single hole.¹³⁶ When asked how that was possible, Novak replied: "Dubrovnik cannot be destroyed!"¹³⁷ In fact, Miller writes that there shells did fall on the old town, but that the damage was nowhere near heavy, but that the real issue was the destruction of the settlements outside Dubrovnik's historic town, where many of the renaissance summer houses of the Dubrovnik's elite were situated, as well as the historic port of Gruž.¹³⁸ Miller's article also mentioned that around historical 80,000 items from the Vukovar library have been taken to Belgrade by the Serbs as another serious crime against Croatian cultural treasure. Miller's article was a rare instance of collected reporting from Croatia, the only one I have encountered where it was explicitly stated that the damage to Dubrovnik was substantially smaller than reported by other journalists, including *Die Presse's*, as we have seen in Kötzer-Hetzendorf's report. Like in their German counterparts, the Austrian quality daily press changed focus soon after the events at Vukovar and Dubrovnik as the diplomatic battle for Croatia's recognition intensified.

3.3 The International Recognition of Croatia

Austria's diplomacy had an undeniable presence in the campaign for the international

¹³⁶ Irene Miller, "Dubrovnik kann nicht zerstört werden", *Die Presse*, December 4, 1991.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

recognition of Croatia, regardless of her actual success, and was covered accordingly in the domestic press. This activity was acknowledged equally in the West as well as Croatia. As early as July of 1991, the French foreign minister said that France has “understanding for Austria's position and the historic foundation for the relationship [with Croatia], but it seems as though Austria is taking sides by differentiating between the good Yugoslavs, who belonged to the [Habsburg] Monarchy and are Catholic and those other, bad ones who were under Ottoman rule.”¹³⁹ Conversely, in December of 1991 *Die Presse* published a report from Croatia with the subheading “Croatia Sees the Recognition by Austria Already As an Accomplished Fact,” in which it is suggested that “Austria's prestige permeates all layers of society” and that Croatia expects that Austria, alongside the “already most substantial humanitarian aid...will also help with saving the badly damaged cultural landmarks,” giving the example of over 300 churches which have been destroyed during the war.¹⁴⁰ More criticism of Austria's policy towards the independence-seeking republics came from the United States and Great Britain in mid-December after the Austrian government received warnings against their unilateral recognition.¹⁴¹ At the same time, the rift between Vranitzky and Mock received ample coverage in the press after a private meeting between the two, after which two different conclusions were drawn by the chancellor and the minister of foreign affairs. The ironically written editorial “War in the Balkans, Viennese [style]” suggests that the government crisis, which was created by the opposing opinions on the timing of the recognition, makes Austria seem like a land of absurdity, and “hopefully people will calm down and help end the actual war in the Balkans. The one in

139 Jacqueline, Thalberg, “Brandstifter kritisiert Feuerwehr,” *Der Standard*, July 14, 1991.

140 Johannes Steinbach, “Austria, Mock – gut!”, *Die Presse*, December 2, 1991.

141 Andreas Unterberger, “Alleingang Wiens: Bedenken Washingtons und Londons”, *Die Presse*, December 13, 1991.

Vienna is completely superfluous.”¹⁴² The next day a commentary in *Die Presse* discussing the issue of the coalition infighting proclaimed:

The reputation and a piece of Austria's credibility are at stake here. Mistakes, fooleries, disputes, misunderstandings in foreign policy can be more ruinous than the same things in domestic politics. Certainly they are more embarrassing. It is an issue of, so to speak, mistakes which don't stay in the family, but rather trumpeted for the whole world to see.¹⁴³

Even though in Germany Genscher and chancellor Kohl did not see eye to eye on the matter of Croatia either, the German press did not dwell on the issue as much as their Austrian counterparts.

The frustration of the Austrian press over the inner quarrels in the coalition seemed to dissipate somewhat as the European Community's official date for the recognition neared, even though the matter was anything but resolved. But the European Community also received some criticism for their fragmented Yugoslav policy. On the 15th of January, 1992, the day before the recognition, *Der Standard* correspondent from Brussels bemoaned the confusion which characterised EC's management of the crisis, offering as an example the inefficiency of the Brussels bureaucracy who, 36 hours before the deadline they themselves set, still could not communicate the official findings of the EC commission established to verify if Slovenia and Croatia meet all the criteria for a recognition.¹⁴⁴ *Die Presse*'s editor Andreas Unterberger went even further and called the process the European Community underwent before recognizing Croatia “a difficult birth.”¹⁴⁵ Unterberger stated that:

142 Thomas Chorherr, “Balkan Krieg, Wienerisch”, *Die Presse*, December 19, 1991.

143 Dieter Lenhart, “Außenpolitik von innen”, *Die Presse*, December 20, 1991.

144 Werner Stanzl, “Gemeinsame Politik als Puzzle”, *Der Standard*, January 15, 1992.

145 Andreas Unterberger, “Ein Schwere Geburt”, *Die Presse*, January 16, 1992.

the realisation was painstaking. After more than three quarters of a year, after everything had already become clear, did a good part of Europe suddenly notice that Croatia and Slovenia exist. EC's lawyers were able to divulge, from a report which was held secret until the last moment, that these states do in fact exist. This fact was then also promptly formally acknowledged by many Europeans. And a few hours later could Austria also announce a birth after an even more painful labor.¹⁴⁶

Similar to the German press, the Austrian newspapers seemed more interested in the international response to the war and the drive for recognition - especially their own - than the developments on the ground in Croatia after the fall of Vukovar, but after the recognition some attention was given to the reactions in Croatia. *Der Standard's* correspondent reported from Zagreb the reactions on the streets, adding an interesting remark on the role of the media in this whole process, saying that:

[on] the morning [of the recognition] the atmosphere was almost festive. People congratulated each other. Many had tears in their eyes. The STANDARD correspondent was treated with a glass of sparkling wine by his grocer. The Croats are obviously aware that the international mass media's contribution was decisive in the promotion of the Croatian cause abroad. More than 20 journalists have lost their lives in the process.¹⁴⁷

Die Presse correspondent filed a slightly more melodramatic report, the highlight of which described the scene at a mass in the Zagreb cathedral, where:

A few members of parliament were in attendance along with 10,000 other worshippers. The most touching moment: When cardinal Kuharic put his homeland anew under the protection of Mary, the mother of God, all the bells in Zagreb – few in number – rang. Kuharic directed a reconciliation appeal to all the country's

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Z. P. Gwozdz, "Kroatien intoniert die 'Hymne an die Freiheit'", *Der Standard*, January 16, 1992.

citizens.¹⁴⁸

Both *Die Presse* and *Der Standard* ran the same photo of the celebrations in the streets of Zagreb. In the photo there are three young men celebrating the recognition. One of the men is wearing an Ustasha uniform while another is wearing a Ustasha t-shirt.¹⁴⁹ Neither newspaper found it relevant to inform their readers of the meaning of such symbols. Strangely enough, the caption of the photo in *Die Presse* includes a remark on the 600,000 Serbs who's battle for the recognition of their rights has only begun.¹⁵⁰ Apart from this caption the matter of the Croato-Serb future was almost completely ignored in these newspapers. *Der Standard's* Georg Possanner recapitulated Austria's role in the recognition lucidly:

As far as Vienna's role is concerned, a lot of capital has been wasted since last summer. Minister of foreign affairs Mock's role as the pacesetter of building up awareness that, after Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, Yugoslavia became nothing more than a fantasy is unquestionable. Vranitzky's position on the recognition wasted a lot of sympathy in the new states. Austria has relinquished her pole position voluntarily. Belgrade still sees Vienna as an opponent, the European Community will not reward the restraint, those affected are disappointed. Austria now has her work cut out for her. It comes down to making use of her influence in the European Council, the CSCE and the Security Council of the United Nations to make it easier for Slovenia and Croatia to make their entry there easier. And she needs to dig deep into her pockets.¹⁵¹

Possanner's recommendations for Austria's future actions were correct almost to a fault. Austria did in fact continue to be Croatia's most faithful advocate as the young state was beginning to

148 (ag), "10.000 Gläubige in Agram's Kathedrale", *Die Presse*, January 17, 1992.

149 *Die Presse*, January 17, 1992; *Der Standard*, January 17, 1992.

150 *Die Presse*, January 17, 1992.

151 Georg Possanner, "Der Zweite Tod des Josip Broz Tito," *Der Standard*, January 16, 1992.

find her way.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to show how German and Austrian quality daily press covered the events in Croatia, starting with the first free elections in April 1990 until the international recognition in January 1992. This was done through a framing analysis, and various frames were found, depending on the newspaper and the period analysed.

An expected pro-Croatian bias was prominent in all five newspapers. The extent of this bias, however, varied and often hinged on the political or world view of the author. One of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's* publishers and journalist Johann Georg Reißmüller was an ardent anti-communist, and saw the early stages of the conflict between Croatia and Slovenia against the Serbian president Slobodan Milošević and the Yugoslav federal government in Belgrade as a fight between the forces of democracy and those of communism, which fitted into the bigger picture of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. He was also one of the most vocal proponents of the “ancient hatreds” theory. Reißmüller's voice heavily outweighed that of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's* Yugoslavia correspondent Viktor Meier also wrote with a slight pro-Croatian bias, but never with inflammatory zeal like Reißmüller. The other two German newspapers, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Tageszeitung*, were also far less aggressive in their coverage of Croatia in 1990. *Tageszeitung's* Dunja Melčić had the most unique position in that she was the only Croatian national of all the journalists included in this

study, The dominant frame in this period was the desire of Croatia to become a democratic country and break away from the communist centre in Belgrade. The nationalist component of the conflict was not yet prominent. The Austrian newspapers analysed here, *Die Presse* and *Der Standard* also displayed a more balanced view of the internal processes in Croatia than *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, but in Austria the frame of a potential conflict due to Croat and Serb nationalism was almost as equally prominent as the frame which emphasised Croatia's democratic aspiration. None of the newspapers framed Croatia and Slovenia as the destroyers of Yugoslavia, however.

After the elections, as armed incidents between Croats and Serbs became more frequent before escalating into a war, the rhetoric in these newspapers became more extreme, but the frames changed as well. The hostilities were shown in all newspapers as ethnic conflicts rooted in “ancient hatreds,” with Serbs as the perpetrators and Croats as the victims. These two frames were supported by the “Serbs as destroyers of culture” frame, which was especially prominent during the siege of Dubrovnik and the shelling of its historic town. This frame was most prominent in *Die Presse*, which published several articles claiming extensive damage was done to the city, while publishing only one where it was explained that the damage to the city was minimal, while the surrounding settlements received the brunt of the shelling.

During this period another frame emerged in the German newspapers concerning the role of Germany and the European Community and their efforts of resolving the conflict. German minister of foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher received praise, while the EC was scorned for the lack of understanding of the conflict and the inability to make the right decisions in a timely fashion. This frame became the almost exclusive approach to reporting on

Croatia after the fall of Vukovar and the shelling of Dubrovnik and until the international recognition date was set by the EC in December. In Austria, the dissolution of Yugoslavia was also framed with the efforts of her minister of foreign affairs Alois Mock to solve the crisis. Because Mock was active since the early stages of the crisis, this frame was continuous, but became widely used in the second half of 1991 when the issue of recognizing Croatia became a stumbling block in Austria's coalition government and the chancellor Franz Vranitzky, who, unlike Mock was a pragmatist. This was the dominant frame of reporting until the recognition.

The findings of this analysis suggest that the German and Austrian quality daily press coverage of the events in Croatia followed a relatively uniform pattern, with minor discrepancies. Both viewed the events of 1990 as a continuation of wider process in Europe. Both saw the war in Croatia as a defensive war against the Serbs, characterized by an immense humanitarian catastrophe and the Serbian destruction of cultural landmarks. Both showed the European Community as an inept agglomeration, while at the same time praising the efforts of their countries' diplomacies. The political affiliation of each newspaper influenced their coverage to an extent, but mostly they adhere to these themes. A connection between historical ties between Austria, Germany and Croatia and the pro-Croatian bias in the newspapers was not established.

It is almost impossible to gauge the actual influence of the newspapers on the opinions of their readers or the government policy on the issue they are covering, but in the case of quality daily press we can assume that it was read by high ranking, policy shaping officials. In that sense, it is important to analyse what is being said, and in what manner.

To give a more thorough picture of the German press and Croatia in the early 1990s, it

would be useful to look at a longer time period, including the war in Bosnia, when Croatia found herself fighting a defensive war at home while taking an active role in the war in the neighbouring republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It would also be helpful to analyse weekly news magazines which offer more in-depth commentaries and a greater scope of opinions. I believe that this thesis provides a good foundation for further research on this subject.

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