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Serbian Heritage Museum of Windsor

SERBIAN KRAYINA -
PAST AND PRESENT

May 9 - August 27, 1993

For almost three years the world has been reading one-sided reports about the war in Yugoslavia.

Western journalists, who pride themselves on objectivity have, for some reason, turned a blind eye and deaf ear on the problems and suffering of the Krayina Serbs.

Slovenia and Croatia, who did not want to live under the Yugoslav Government, were recognized by the World Community. Serbs who did not want to live under the Croatian Government were condemned.

The historical fact, that over 700,000 Serbs were tortured and killed in the Nazi-protected Independent State of Croatia, which was a serious concern for Serbs, was downplayed and cast aside by the West as an irrelevant historical event.

Abandoned by everyone, their rights denied, Serbs were forced to protect themselves, their families and their homes. Hundreds of thousands of women and children - Krayina Serbs - found shelter as refugees in Yugoslavia; men stayed behind to fight for the land where, for generations, their forefathers lived.

Almost five hundreds years ago, Serbs were given this land by a decree from the Austrian Emperors; in return, they were obliged to protect the southern border of the Empire from the invasion of the Asiatic Turks. By

their military skill and thousands of sacrificed lives, they saved European Christendom from the Islamic violent rage.

During World War II, Krayina Serbs were brutally betrayed and persecuted by their Croatian neighbours. After the War, in the name of brotherhood and unity, Serbs were able to forgive, but the deep wounds have never been forgotten.

When in 1991 Croatia announced its cession from Yugoslavia, the old problems for Serbs returned.

In the new Croatian State its citizens could only be Croatians or foreigners. Therefore, the Serbian rights as a nation were not acknowledged. In this new Croatia Serbs recognized the signs which precluded the massacres of 1941.

Historically, the land of Serbian Krayina had never belonged to any "State of Croatia", except from 1941-1945, when Nazi Germany established a puppet government and gave Ustashi a free hand in ruling the area.

Up to World War I, Serbs in Krayina were an ethnic minority in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After 1918, they were a constituent group of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovans - later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After World War II, Krayina became a part of the communist ruled Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Within the internal, administrative borders of Yugoslavia, Serbian Krayina found itself a part of the Federal Republic of Croatia. Borders which were never intended as any ethnic divisions among the people who lived there, have all of a sudden become cast in stone. However, when the present confrontation arouse, the World Community, lacking the understanding of and sensitivity to the local problems, and strongly pressured by Germany and some other countries, recognized Croatian independence and placed itself on one side of a bloody civil war.

Through maps, documents and illustrations, the exhibit offers a survey of events from the time Serbs inhabited the Krayina region to the present day where denial of their rights to self determination has plunged this area into a civil war.

In addition to the historical survey of events, the exhibit features costumes of the Krayina Serbs, their folk art and items used in their everyday lives.

Krayina Serbs are a proud people with great strength and moral integrity. They are fighting today, as their ancestors have in the past, for no other reason but to protect their families, their homes and their land.

To these people and their cause, and to the principle of truth and objectivity, this exhibit is humbly devoted.