



Following the statement by Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic that blatant comments had been heard from Serbia, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivo Dacic said that it was Plenkovic who should explain what was so blatant about Serbia's expectation that the Croatian Government should distance itself from attempts aimed at rehabilitating the Ustasha fascist regime and crimes committed by the NDH against Serb, Jewish and Roma populations.

"The NDH stretched as far as Zemun, Novi Sad and Sabac, encompassing Bosnia and Herzegovina in its entirety, all the way to the River Drina, and more than 30% of the Serb population who had lived there was killed. PM Plenkovic recently visited the Yad Vashem memorial centre in Jerusalem, Israel, and bowed to the memory of the Jews killed, writing the following words in the condolence book: "Sincerely sympathizing with the families of the victims and the Jewish people, I join the voices of all humanity in uttering: Never again!".

The name of Jasenovac concentration camp is among those listed at that same spot in the Yad Vashem. It would be only appropriate if Plenkovic bowed in Jasenovac as well, to the memory of those killed there. The only difference being that, on his way there, he would have to pass by a plate with an Ustasha salute "for homeland ready" placed in front of the Jasenovac camp. And he cannot bow at both of those places. In Jasenovac, 19,432 children were killed, including infants and 14-year olds, of whom 11,888 were Serb, 5,469 Roma, 1,911 Jewish, 132 Croatian and 17 Muslim children. Those children certainly deserve that the Croatian Prime Minister bowed to their memory as well and said or wrote: "Never again!"

I hope it won't be considered blatant on my part if I send as a reminder to PM Plenkovic a book listing all the names and surnames of the children killed, my only wish being that crimes never be done again by whomever and wherever committed before.

In the same context, according to Stepinac himself and the memorandum he delivered to Pope Pius XII in May 1943 in the Vatican, by that time, a total of 240 thousand Serbs had been converted to Catholicism.

"Narodne novine", the official gazette of the NDH, on 5 May 1941, published the Law on Religious Conversion, and the Official Gazette of the Zagreb curia, "Katolicki list" of 15 May 1941, published a circular letter from Stepinac's office which welcomed with enthusiasm the

adoption of the Law imposing conversion of Orthodox Christians to Catholicism.

The Government's Decree No. 11689, dated June 1941, established a special department in charge of religion and conversion, headed by Catholic priest Dionis Juricevic, notorious for saying to the inhabitants of Staza that "he had executed a full cleansing, from babies to the elderly".

Finally, in a letter to Poglavnik/Leader Pavelic from the Plenary Conference of Catholic Bishops in Zagreb, 17-19 November 1941, Stepinac wrote that "for this purpose the Croatian Catholic Bishops shall appoint three of its members to a Board, to consist of President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference Archbishop Stepinac, Bishop of Senj Monsignor Dr Victor Buric, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Križevci Dr Janko Simrak. The Board shall discuss all issues raised with regard to conversion of Greek Orthodox Christians to Catholicism".

Serbia expects that any official of the Croatian Government should ever address these crimes so that they are not repeated. It is a moral duty of all of us to prevent relativity and rehabilitation of crimes committed everywhere and any place, including in both world wars as well as the conflicts of the 1990s and the dissolution of the SFRY.

The past is immutable, but we can work to make the present and the future look better for our peoples and states."