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The Senj Uskoks Reconsidered

PHILIP LONGWORTH

THE interest generated by the Senj Uskoks is strikingly disproportionate to their numbers.¹ Few groups so small as they can have attracted so much attention from both polemicists of the time and from historians since.² There are several reasons why this should be the case. For almost a century (c.1540–1620) these Uskoks enjoyed a reputation as Christendom's first line of defence against the advancing Turks, and notoriety on account of their piratical activities; they occasioned the so-called Uskok War (otherwise the War of Gradisca) of 1615–17 between Austria and the Venetian Republic, and played an important role in the development of the Austrian Military Frontier system.³ Moreover some historians of Croatia have discerned in them a thread of national continuity in that troubled period which followed the collapse of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Yet the Senj Uskoks deserve attention for other reasons which have been largely overlooked. In so far as they inhabited a borderland (not only between Austria, Venice and Turkey, but between the worlds of Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism⁴) they constituted a

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¹ The author acknowledges support from the Social Science Research Council which allowed the collection of the archival material referred to in this article. Microfilm of most of the manuscripts referred to below is deposited in the Library of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.

² Among contemporaries Minucio Minuci, *Historia de gli Uscochi*, Venice, 1602 (1603); [Paolo Sarpi], *Aggiunta all'istoria degli Uscochi . . .*, n.d. [?1614] and his *Supplimento dell'Historia degli Uschochi . . .*, n.d. [?1617] (also G. and L. Cozzi, eds, *La Repubblica di Venezia, la casa d'Austria e gli Uscochi*, Bari, 1965); and F. Rački, ed., 'Prilog za povijest hrvatskih uskoka' (*Starine*, ix, Zagreb, 1877, pp. 175–256): this dialogue between 'Antonio' and 'Giovanni' is housed in the Archivio di Stato, Florence (Carte Stroziane, serie 1, no. 259). The work is hereinafter referred to as Rački. Among historians J. W. von Valvasor, *Die Ehre desz Herzognthums Crain*, 4 vols, Laybach, 1689; Silvino Gigante, *Venezia e gli Uscochi dal 1570 al 1620*, 2nd edn, Rijeka, 1930 (1931); R. and E. Eickhoff, *Die Uskoken in der Adria*, Saarbrücken, 1956, and, more recently, Gligor Stanojević, *Senjski Uskoci*, Zagreb, 1973. Other works are cited below.

³ See Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia 1522–1747*, Urbana, 1960.

⁴ Allegiances have been characterized as predominantly Orthodox at the original Uskok base at Klis and Catholic in the Senj area (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana (hereafter Bib. Marc.), vii, 914 [= 8592], ff. 122 ff.), yet Greek rites were not only practised in Venetian enclaves farther south (e.g. Sebenico [Šibenik] — see Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter ASV), Sac. Cong. Concilio: Relations: Sebenicen, 1609) but retained in some measure as far north as Istria (where the catechism was given in 'Illyrian' — see ASV, Sac. Cong. Concilio: Visit. Apost., no. 58, 1759) and also in the Senj area (ASV, Sac. Cong. Concilio: Relations: Segnien, Veglen, etc.). For various compromises practised at Trogir [Traù] see *ibid.* Traguren (relations of 1592, 1622 and 1627), and for the use of 'Illyrian missals' on Rab see ASV, Misc. Arm., vii, 101. References to 'schismatics' are not infrequent, and the number of non-communicants reported is sometimes impressive (e.g. in the Trieste area — ASV, Sac. Cong. Concilio: Relations: Tergestina). See also the works of Petrus Petretić and Benedictus Vintiović, Bishops of Zagreb (Zagreb, Arhiv Jugoslavenske Akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, nos DCCCXXXV and DCCCCLXXXVIII) and D. Kasić, *Srpski monastiri u Hrvatskoj i Sloveniji*, Belgrade, 1971.

particularly interesting frontier society, exemplifying both the nature of life and war along the Slavic-Turkish marches in the early modern period and the springs from which it stemmed.

It is one of the purposes of this article to explore these aspects, but this will be done in the course of discussing more finite questions. In particular the troublesome problem of the Uskoks' origins will be re-examined, some popular assumptions about their allegiances and motives will be questioned, their environment described and their behaviour accounted for. Finally some comparisons will be drawn with other frontier communities in the period, and some questions posed relating to the fundamental causes of the almost perpetual warfare which affected the region which the Uskoks inhabited.

It should be made clear at the outset that it is extremely difficult to form any complete and consistent picture of the Senj Uskoks from the mass of literature about them. To some extent this reflects the partisan nature of contemporary sources, for the Uskoks themselves left scant evidence of their own to posterity and their history has to be pieced together from the records of their allies, overlords and enemies, which naturally reflect conflicting perceptions of them. However, much of the writing devoted to them is adversely affected by the authors' religious or national commitments, and (which is worse) treats of them in terms of neat formulations and clear definitions to which the subject is not susceptible.

The world of the Senj Uskoks was essentially chaotic, lacking effective boundaries, territorial, religious or social. They and their neighbours defy any attempt to pigeon-hole them into neat ethnic, ideological or political categories. The people in question changed their allegiances; groups coalesced, disintegrated and overlapped with others. The great powers of the region could exercise no effective day-to-day control in sectors of this borderland nominally under their sway.⁵ In sum we are dealing with a turbulent, dangerous no-man's-land; a frontier which was a zone rather than a line.⁶

Difficulties arise as soon as the attempt is made to explain who precisely the Uskoks were. The word *uskok* denotes a runaway or fugitive. According to most writers it was applied to Balkan Christians who, from the fifteenth century, fled to escape Turkish rule — to avoid the payment of tribute, religious oppression, slavery or annihilation.⁷

⁵ For example, border warfare continued unabated despite the treaties of 1547 and 1562: see Rothenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 32 and 36-38.

⁶ See Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History*, London, 1962, especially pp. 469-70. He regards such activities as smuggling, which affect people on both sides of a border, as a modification of political loyalty in response to economic self-interest. 'Men of both border populations, working together in this way become a "we" group to which others of their own nationality, and especially the authorities are "they".'

⁷ For example, M. Prelog, 'Uskoci', *Narodna Enciklopedija*, vol. iv, Zagreb, 1929, pp. 720-22, and R. and E. Eickhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

According to one twentieth-century historian, their origins lay in Christian guerrilla resistance to the Turks; they were people who 'preferred an unsettled life . . . and often certain death to the shame of subjection and equally certain death in forced service' for the Turks.⁸ The term Uskok, according to Horvath, was generally applied to:

. . . all those Christian runaways who fled from the Turks from various areas of Bosna and Dalmatia occupied by the Turks and settled down, first at the fortress of Klis and after its fall [in 1537] at . . . Senj.⁹

A closer examination of the evidence, however, suggests that these explanations, while they have the merit of clarity, are far from satisfactory. In the first place 'Uskok' and 'fugitive' were not co-terminous. The fugitives from Bosna reported in Venetian-held Šibenik in 1516, for example, were not called Uskoks.¹⁰ Some of the Uskok servicemen at Senj were not fugitives but local people;¹¹ the thousands of refugees settled in the Petrinja area of Slavonia after 1595 (although *uskoči* in the literal sense) were known as Vlachs;¹² and, of course, by no means all of those called Uskoks were connected with Senj.¹³ Moreover, the fact that, although one 'Gjuro Uschok' [*sic*] was serving in Senj as early as 1530,¹⁴ there is no explicit mention of a group of Uskoks there until 1549¹⁵ is also difficult to fit into Horvath's scheme. Indeed the problem of identifying the Uskoks as a coherent group or stratum is comparable to that of identifying the Cossacks of the period, who were commonly termed *cherkessy* and definable in a variety of ways according to their context and function.¹⁶

Secondly, it is misleading to think of Uskoks generally as originating in a sudden mass migration to escape Muslim rule as so much of the literature suggests. Migrants were reported both long before and

⁸ Mauro Kravjanszky, 'Il processo degli Uscocchi' (*Archivio Veneto*, 5th series, 5, 1929, pp. 234-66).

⁹ Karl Horvath, *Monumenta historiam uscocchorum illustrantia*, 2 vols, Zagreb, 1910-13, vol. 1, p. vii, note 1 (quoting various sources).

¹⁰ Venice, Archivio di Stato (hereafter VAS), Capi Consiglio Dieci, busta 280 (not direct to the Council of Ten): report by Donato from Sebenico, 6 March 1516. The first use of the term Uskok I have found in Venetian sources seems to date from the 1520s: VAS, Capi Cons. Dieci: Lettere Rettori, b. 302 (my dating).

¹¹ See S. Pavičić, 'Senj u svojem naselnom i društvenom razvitku od 10 stoljeća do oturskog provoda' in *Senjski zbornik*, III, Senj, 1967-68, pp. 324-70.

¹² Rothenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

¹³ For example, the Uskoks of Kotor (see Boško Desnica, ed., *Istorija Kotarskih Uskoka*, 2 vols, Belgrade 1950-51) and of Žumberak.

¹⁴ Emilij Laszowski, ed., *Monumenta Hapsburga*, 3 vols, Zagreb, 1914-17, I, pp. 439-40.

¹⁵ The reference is to Pavel Lasinović, chief of a band at Senj who called themselves Uskoks and were neither townsmen nor servicemen but took part in the larger expeditions. Uskoks are not mentioned in the Senj service lists of 1540 and 1551 although by then the term was in use at Žumberak: see Pavičić, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶ See Günter Stökl, *Die Entstehung des Kozakentums*, Munich, 1953; Philip Longworth, *The Cossacks*, London, 1969, pp. 14-15 and 342-44.

long after the battle of Mohács in 1526. By 1463 the Turks, having occupied Bosna were raiding Croatia and threatening 'to depredate Dalmatia also'; and refugees were already arriving in the coastal towns and islands belonging to Venice.¹⁷ Refugees were arriving at Senj as late as 1599.¹⁸ Hence the migration was gradual and cumulative rather than sudden and massive.

Thirdly, it is questionable to attribute the cause of the flight solely to the Turks. Initially at least Turkish rule seems to have been quite moderate; the newly subjected populations were not much interfered with, and some of them were probably soon better off than they had been before.¹⁹ Moreover, population movements had been characteristic of the region before the Turks arrived and continued to be so. Nomadic pastoralism, for example, was widely practised by the Vlachs of the Dalmatian mountains;²⁰ and, as we shall see, there is evidence of Christians migrating into as well as out of Turkish territory. In short, it seems probable that many, perhaps most, of those who became Uskoks were not so much Christian activists who preferred to migrate rather than submit to the rather mild rule of Muslims, but rather people who had been ruined (or feared ruin) by frontier raids, many but by no means all of them raids mounted by the Turks (it has been suggested, for example, that the northward migrations of the Serbs were triggered by the Albanians rather than the Turks²¹); that they were people caught up in the petty guerrilla wars waged independently of governments by local lords and tribal chiefs; victims of the recurrent conflict between mountain-men and lowlanders.²²

¹⁷ Giovanni Lucio, *Historia di Dalmatia*, Venice, 1674, pp. 459–60.

¹⁸ VAS, Senato: Provveditori di terra e da mar (hereafter PTM), b. 922: report enclosed in Donato's letter from Veglia (Krk), 12 March 1599.

¹⁹ Although most of the great feudal lords were dispossessed, many landowners, especially smaller ones, retained their estates. Indeed, many Christian garrisons had deserted to the Turks on being promised *timars*. They were only gradually required to conform to Ottoman law and to convert to Islam. Many *sipāhis*, especially in Hercegovina, were Christians, and additions were being made to their ranks as late as 1521. Furthermore, the introduction of Turkish centralized government was accompanied by an improvement for peasants and particularly for pastoralists, not least in Bosna: see Halil Inalcik, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest' (*Studia Islamica*, 2, Paris, 1954, pp. 103 ff.); Djerdjev, 'Bosna', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, Leiden and London, 1960, and V. J. Parry, 'The Ottoman Empire 1481–1520', in *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1957, pp. 395–419. It is possible, however, that the improvement in the conditions of peasants and pastoralists may have been due in part to depopulation.

²⁰ See Konstantin Jiriček, 'Vlasi, Mavrovlasī u dubrovačkim spomenicima', in *Šbornik Konstantina Jiričeka*, 1, Belgrade, 1959, pp. 191 ff.; Wayne S. Vucinich, *A Study in Social Survival: the Katun in Bileća Rudine*, Denver, 1975, pp. 16–17; Nicoară Beldiceanu, 'Sur les Valaques des Balkans Slaves à l'époque Ottomane (1450–1550)' (*Revue des études islamiques*, xxxiv, Paris, 1966, pp. 83–132, especially pp. 90–92); also P. Skok, 'Vlah' in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. VIII, Zagreb, 1971, pp. 514–16. It should be noted that Albanians and others were or became pastoralists and many of them, like the Vlachs, were Slavicized.

²¹ R. Busch-Zantner, *Albanien*, Leipzig, 1939, p. 86.

²² Roger Portal, *The Slavs*, London, 1965, p. 242; R. and E. Eickhoff, op. cit., p. 224.

Some of these *uskoci* were employed by the Austrians as border guards against the Turks; but others gained employment in the Venetian²³ and Turkish military zones. Some joined the work-forces of Venetian landlords; some joined monasteries like that of St Anthony on Rab;²⁴ indeed there are reports of others who volunteered to serve the Venetians at Omiš in 1576 in order to escape from the Uskoks.²⁵

But if it is difficult to define the Uskoks in general it is not much easier to define the Uskok community at Senj itself with any precision. As their most recent historian remarks:

In practice it was difficult to draw a dividing line between the full-time Uskoks and their harbourers and associates in Dalmatia. They always contrived to avoid being identified, covering their tracks and leaving the enemy in doubt as to who had committed an action.²⁶

Evidently the confusion which they wrought among their enemies bedevils their historians to this day. But although the Uskoks of Senj inhabited an historical 'underworld', difficult of access, the problem is not insoluble.

Some of the confusion arises from the fact that the term Uskok came to be associated with the term Senjan, though it is clear that the town of Senj was inhabited before the refugees arrived, that some of the indigenous inhabitants became Uskoks,²⁷ and that raiders who went out from Senj were often joined by people from Venetian Dalmatia who were neither Senjans, nor always Uskoks in the sense of coming from the Turkish zone. This fact was recognized by contemporaries, including Minucio Minuci, Archbishop of Zadar, who, although resident in Venetian territory, supervised the Bishopric of Senj, and was the author of the earliest published account of the Senj Uskoks;²⁸ and the reports of Venetian officers and officials confirm it. As Christoforo Valier wrote to the Doge in 1596:

There are two sorts of Uskok; some of them natives of Senj, Croats and Morlachs from Turkish parts [and] Dalmatian bandits, runaways from the galleys and malcontented subjects of Your Serenity who are by nature inclined to plunder and kill.²⁹

²³ See J. Mal, *Uskoče seobe i slovenačke pokrajine*, Ljubljana, 1924, p. 93.

²⁴ ASV, Sac. Cong. Concilio: Visit. Apost., no. 57, Dalmatia, 1579.

²⁵ ASV, Misc. Arm., II, 76, f. 69 (101)^r.

²⁶ Stanojević, op. cit., p. 323.

²⁷ Vinko Hreljanović, the Uskok *vojvoda* came from the Senj patriciate: see Branko Krmpotić, in *Senjski zbornik*, III, pp. 196–206.

²⁸ Minuci, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁹ Grga Novak, ed., *Commissiones et Relationes Venetae*, vol. V, Zagreb, 1966, pp. 210–11. The term Morlach (or sea-Vlach), in use in northern Dalmatia from the fourteenth century, came to apply to the rural population of Dalmatia as a whole: Jiriček, loc. cit.

A year earlier Valier's predecessor as Provveditor-General in Dalmatia, Benedetto Moro, had been rather more exact in identifying 'three kinds of Uskok' — the inhabitants of Senj, immigrant Turkish subjects 'called Martolos (*armatolos*) and Morlachs', and Venetian subjects.³⁰ And another commander, Pisani, in 1588, had also identified runaways from the territory of the Emperor and Archduke. In sum, he concluded in terms of almost despairing vagueness, these Uskoks were 'people of diverse sorts who wish to devote themselves to the bad life'.³¹

What emerges, then, is anything but a clear-cut group of frontier warriors sharing common origins, but rather an amorphous community with several constituents — firstly the original inhabitants of Senj, a town which, like others along the coast, had had a long if intermittent record as a pirate base,³² and whose people were to mount raids long after the Austrians had removed the core of Uskok troublemakers.³³ Secondly there were the Uskoks proper, that is immigrants from Turkish territory (an immigration which, as has been shown, neither began with the fall of Klis in 1537 nor ceased by the middle of the century as has often been suggested but was continuing as late as 1599³⁴ and which was accompanied by movements back into Turkish territory³⁵). Thirdly there were bandits from adjacent Venetian territory who masqueraded as Uskoks,³⁶ who aided and abetted them and sometimes joined in regular Uskok expeditions or with the community at Senj itself. And finally there were immigrants from Austrian (and Ragusan) territory.³⁷

However, another Venetian account suggests that 'the name Uskok denotes not a nation, but a profession',³⁸ and it may indeed be helpful to consider them in terms of function rather than origins.

³⁰ Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. v, pp. 123–40.

³¹ Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. vii, Zagreb, 1970, p. 18.

³² Rački, *op. cit.*, p. 231; J. J. Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, London, 1969, pp. 164, 187, 190 and 256.

³³ See, for example, Lorenzo Dona's report from Zara [Zadar], 16 April 1684 in Desnica, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 352–53.

³⁴ VAS, PTM, b. 922; appendix to Donato's report of 12 March 1599. Such famous Uskok names as Frletić and Granulović are not encountered before 1600: see Pavičić, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

³⁵ On the return of Uskoks and Morlachs to their former homes in Turkish territory see VAS, PTM, b. 922, report of 17 June 1599.

³⁶ As a contemporary friend of the Senj Uskoks put it, there 'are many islanders from Veglia, Pago, Arbe [i.e. Krk, Pag, Rab]' who gather to rob 'under the name of Uskok': in Rački, *op. cit.*, p. 231. Many people on Brač and Hvar also followed the example of the Senj Uskoks: Pavičić, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

³⁷ As the names Ljublanac and Dubrovčanić indicate. See the analysis of the 1540 and 1551 registers in Pavičić, *op. cit.*, pp. 341–46. He concludes that only about twenty of those registered in 1540 came from outside, but that by 1551 most came from Croatia.

³⁸ Venice, Correr Library, Codice Cicogna, no. 2005, part 4: Relation of the origin of the Uskok War.

This would avoid such anomalies in the latter schema as those inhabitants of Senj who, as reported in 1608, were against the Uskoks,³⁹ or those people in the neighbourhood who joined in an occasional foray mounted from Senj without belonging to the central core. On the other hand banditry was not the only Uskok 'profession'.

The Senj Uskoks also provided a frontier defence force (albeit an unruly one) for the Austrians. However, by no means all of them served in this force. The authorities registered Uskoks (and Senjans) as salaried garrison troops in an analogous way to that in which the Polish kings from Batory onwards registered Ukrainian Cossacks for military service, refusing registration to others.⁴⁰ Hence we find Venetians commonly distinguishing between three other categories of Senj Uskok — the *stipendiati*, or registered Uskoks in receipt of Austrian pay; the *casalini*, or householders, that is, the original inhabitants and those immigrants who took over houses abandoned during the period of Senj's depopulation (see *infra*); and finally the *venturini* or bandits, that is the more recent immigrants and runaways from Venetian territory or Venetian service and presumably the poorest (comparable to the Don Cossack *golyt'ba* of the seventeenth century).

At this stage we may summarize developments in the connotation of the word *uskok*. Originally a generic term applied to runaways or displaced persons (identification in terms of origins), it came to describe members of particular communities in Croatia and Dalmatia (denoting particular societies or social groups), Adriatic pirates (identification by function), and a stratum of frontier servicemen (identification of a status).

However, the Senj Uskoks did not serve the Austrians exclusively. In 1537–41, 1569, 1609, and 1619–20 some of them volunteered to enter Venetian service,⁴¹ and at various times others of them joined, or offered their services to, the Duke of Tuscany,⁴² the Viceroy of Naples⁴³ and the Pope.⁴⁴ When their community was threatened with dissolution in 1619 some of them thought of going over to the

³⁹ VAS, PTM, b. 423: report by Zane from Zara, 8 July 1608.

⁴⁰ For an account of registration, see Rothenberg, *op. cit. passim*.

⁴¹ Kravjanszky, *op. cit.*, p. 239; VAS, PTM, b. 423: Zane from Zara 24 August 1608; *ibid.*, b. 60: Zorzi from Zara, 28 July 1619, and 16 March 1620 with enclosure dated 8 March 1620.

⁴² See R. and E. Eickhoff, *op. cit.*: e.g. in 1609.

⁴³ For example, VAS, PTM, b. 60: Zorzi from Zara, 22 July 1619. For their relations with the Duke of Osuña see Z. Reberski de Baričević, 'El duque de Osuña y los uscoques de Sena' in *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, Buenos Aires, 1967, pp. 301–51.

⁴⁴ On Uskoks leaving for Ancona (Papal territory), VAS, PTM, b. 60: Zorzi from Zara (with enclosure), 4 October 1620.

Turks.⁴⁵ Indeed some of them returned to their former domiciles in Turkish territory prior to that.⁴⁶

Nor were they always obedient to their Austrian employers when in their service. In 1601, for example, when an Austrian Commissioner, Josafa Rabatta, arrived in Senj, hanged two Uskok leaders, extradited some Venetian runaways and tried to take the remainder in hand, the Uskoks stormed the castle and killed him. Such behaviour may be interpreted as an indication of their independence of spirit; and their reported ghoulishness (not only on this occasion,⁴⁷ but when, for example, they massacred the crew of a ship from Capodistria, and their treatment of the corpse of the captured Christoforo Venier⁴⁸), may be attributed to propaganda reflecting Venetian hostility towards them. However, they demonstrate that Uskok victims were by no means confined to Turks, Muslims and Jews. Indeed some parts of the Christian-populated Lika area are said to have been denuded by the Uskoks who led all the Christians of the region away into captivity.⁴⁹

It is therefore impossible to reconcile the great number of Christians who fell victim to them with the myth that grew up about the Uskoks as anti-Turkish freedom-fighters, crusading Christians bent on throwing back Islam. Religious preferences may have contributed to the motives of some of them on particular occasions, but the evidence suggests that they themselves cared less about their crusading or 'patriotic' role than did the historians who attribute it to them.⁵⁰ Yet the historical origins of the myth can be traced from the sources.

The Austrians fostered it in defending them against complaints about their activities lodged by the Republic of Venice; and the Uskoks themselves evidently knew how to flatter their Austrian masters and ingratiate themselves with potential patrons like the Pope by endorsing anti-Turkish ideology when circumstances suited

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: Zorzi (with enclosure), 28 July 1619.

⁴⁶ For example in 1599 (ASV, PTM, b. 922: Donato from Zara, 17 June and from San Marco Strait, 21 September); also report of Uskok women leaving Senj, *ibid.*, f. 1321: Belegno from S. Piero, 4 January 1602/3.

⁴⁷ When the women allegedly dipped their hands into his blood and drank it: Minuci, *op. cit.*, p. 111; Horvath, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 2-3 (report by Francesco Michiel, Governor of Krk); see also *Bib. Marc.*, It. VI, 65 (= 6210): relation of G. A. Belegno.

⁴⁸ They are said to have used his head as a centre-piece at a celebration feast, eaten his heart and dipped their bread into his blood: see J. Gardner Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro*, London, 1848, pp. 429-30 (quoting Sarpi or another uncited source); R. and E. Eickhoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-15. Venetians commonly characterized the Uskoks as 'evil-living people', robbers, thieves and killers given to drinking their victims' blood: e.g. see Minuci, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 and 88.

⁴⁹ Stanojević, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁵⁰ In characterizing both Turkish and Christian warriors as chivalrous and describing love affairs which cross the 'border' Uskok folklore itself suggests that the inhabitants of the region failed to perceive their loyalties to 'nation' or religion quite as fiercely or in so clear-cut a way as much of the writing has described them.

them. For example, in 1592–93 Guido Cipriani of Lucca, a Dominican friar and possibly an Uskok spokesman (his order had long been established in the Senj area⁵¹) was in Rome, vigorously defending them before the Pope on the grounds that they were the saviours of Italy and protectors of the faith, and proposing that they might mount a crusade to recapture Constantinople from the Turks, given an appropriate amount of aid.⁵²

However, if the crusader image does not fit the Senj Uskoks, nor do Venetian explanations of their bellicose behaviour, that they were ‘by nature inclined to plunder and kill’, the judgement of two modern German historians that they had an ‘angeborene Neigung zum Kampf’,⁵³ or the more interesting suggestion in a recent Yugoslav work that the Senj Uskoks had ‘an ancient pre-feudal conception of work as being unworthy of a free man’ and that they were warlike because they considered it ‘more honourable to live with a gun in one’s hand than to pour out sweat in work’.⁵⁴ (Peasants of medieval Friesland or Holland, not to mention the Swiss, valued their freedom no less, yet did not disdain labour; besides which the life of an Uskok was extremely hard as well as dangerous). But if these explanations are to be dismissed, what alternative more consistent with the totality of available evidence can be offered in their place?

Any satisfactory explanation must take account of the Uskoks’ environment and economic predicament. The eighteenth-century historian Valvasor (although he also subscribed to the usual clichés about the Uskoks, such as that they ‘loved to rob, steal and plunder’), provided an unwitting clue to the true source of their behaviour when he added that ‘they could not exist without brigandage and murder’.⁵⁵ In so far as these words suggest that the Uskoks had no alternative but to live in the way they did, the suggestion fits the circumstances. The Senj Uskoks found themselves trapped in an inhospitable environment between mountains and the sea with no adequate means of livelihood other than by the use of violence.

The geography of the Senj area posed considerable economic problems for its inhabitants. Towering above the town and the

⁵¹ Rome, Santa Sabina Monastery Archive: Registri, iv, 3, ff. 208 ff. (Dalmatia), especially f. 211^r; also Albertus de Meyer, ed., *Registrum litterarum Fr. Thomae de via Caietani O.P. Magistri ordinis 1508–1513*, Rome, 1935, pp. 13, 33, 49, 55–58, 68, 74, etc. on connections with Senj (Zechiensis; Szechenii).

⁵² ASV, Garampi index; Minuci, op. cit., pp. 47–49. Cipriani was subsequently arrested by the papal authorities. The attempts to recapture Klis, temporarily successful in 1596, have rather more of a ‘crusading’ flavour about them, but were conventional military operations directed by Lencović, Austrian General of the Croatian border, and atypical of the Senj Uskoks normal activities.

⁵³ R. and E. Eickhoff, op. cit., p. 203.

⁵⁴ Stanojević, op. cit., p. 310.

⁵⁵ Valvasor, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 75.

adjacent coastline are the Velebit Mountains. The terrain was both precipitous and barren, described by a contemporary as being 'without water, without arable land . . . without timber'.⁵⁶ The *maquis* provided pasture for a few sheep and goats; some vines and fruit trees grew there, and the sea provided some fishing. The location, however, could only support a population numbered in hundreds, not thousands.

The reason for Senj's economic existence as a town of some 3,000 inhabitants had been trade. As a port it had disadvantages in that large ships could not put in there when the infamous *bora* blew down from the north-east. On the other hand Senj enjoyed useful communications inland across the Vratnik Pass to the Lika and the Sava valley. Thanks to this, Senj had been a thriving commercial centre with a successful fair at the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁵⁷ This modest prosperity disappeared, however, when the economic life of the interior was disrupted.

Early in the sixteenth century the Morlachs of the Dalmatian hinterland had themselves turned to brigandage⁵⁸ and Senj itself was soon affected. In October 1525 Petar Krusić, Captain of Senj and Count of Klis, wrote to the Pope bewailing the extent to which the district was suffering from constant incursions and depopulations,⁵⁹ and by January 1530 the town council (*općina*) of Senj reported that the town and its environs had been plunged into shortage and misery by the depredations of Martolos (in fact Morlachs engaged as frontier raiders by the Turks⁶⁰). The region had been devastated, they wrote, and the merchants of Senj were unable to trade or venture out to sea.⁶¹

By 1538 only about a thousand people remained in Senj (of whom 161 served in the garrison).⁶² Moreover with newcomers (Uskoks) continuing to drift into the town the economic strains became

⁵⁶ Venice, Correr Library, Cod. Cicogna, no. 2855, f. 12^r. For a modern description see H. C. Darby, gen. ed., *Jugoslavia*, 3 vols, H.M.S.O., 1944-45, vol. I, pp. 132-33 and vol. III, p. 78.

⁵⁷ Marino Sanuto, *Diarii*, 58 vols, Venice, 1879-1909, II, col. 659.

⁵⁸ Fuscus Patavinus Palladius, *De situ orae Illyrici*, Rome, 1540, pp. 4^v-5^r. It is interesting to note that the same was soon being said of the Uskoks. On Morlachs as raiders and rustlers see also the reports of Venier from Trogir, 30 December 1503 and another from Zara, 28 February 1504, in Sanuto, *Diarii*, vol. V, cols 803 and 808; also note 94 below. The Morlachs' fearsome reputation persisted into the twentieth century: 'As far as the Narenta the country-people are called Morlaks, but further to the south, as at Ragusa, the name is a term of reproach': Karl Baedeker, *Handbook for Travellers: Austria-Hungary including Dalmatia and Bosnia*, 10th edn, Leipzig, 1905, p. 291.

⁵⁹ ASV: Principe 3, f. 307^{r-v}.

⁶⁰ On Martolos (*armartolos*) see Milan Vasić, *Martolosi u jugoslavenskim zemljama pod turskim vladavinom*, Sarajevo, 1967.

⁶¹ Laszowski, op. cit., vol. II, p. 25.

⁶² Pavičić, op. cit., pp. 338 and 346.

progressively more severe.⁶³ Whereas the Austrians granted land on favourable terms to Uskok servicemen in other areas,⁶⁴ they were unable to at Senj which lacked an agricultural hinterland of sufficient size, and so cash payments were substituted. However, comparatively few Senj Uskoks were registered for service, their salaries fluctuated in size and were paid very irregularly.⁶⁵ As early as 1530 the 'salaried warriors' at Senj were complaining that they had not been paid,⁶⁶ and a report of 1586 refers to Uskok servicemen so badly equipped that they had to stand guard in their bare feet even in winter.⁶⁷ Hence even the salaried Uskoks were largely dependent on booty.

The situation at Senj and its neighbourhood forts had not improved by the end of the century, even though the number of servicemen had increased, and in conditions of increasing population and declining income even the erstwhile solid citizens of Senj were forced to turn their hands to piracy. As a report of March 1590 by the Captain of Senj (at that time Furio Molza, appropriately a Knight of the piratical Order of Malta) makes clear: 'the people of Senj' had 'no other means of livelihood than . . . to plunder enemy ports'.⁶⁸ And a decade or so later Archbishop Minuci remarked that:

Robbery . . . became so general that even the ordinary citizens of Senj who had been accustomed to live modestly, or by honest toil, came to be attracted by that occupation . . . and some who were ashamed to associate personally with the rogues would keep some servant in their house who would go out with the others on an expedition and bring back to his master a share of the booty, while others would provide the poor with provisions or other necessities on condition that they would receive a share of the booty.⁶⁹

⁶³ Although the Austrians laid down a comprehensive customs tariff for Senj in 1577 (see Zlatko Herkov, 'Carinski cjenik grada Senja od godine 1577' (*Vjesnik historijskih arhiva u Rijeci i Pazinu*, xvii, Rijeka, 1972, pp. 45-78)), I have found no indications as to the volume of trade in the period. However, plundered goods were marketed, often at Fiume, and trading relations were maintained with Italy, notably Ancona.

⁶⁴ The first such recorded grant to Uskoks is dated 5 June 1535: Radoslav Lopašić, ed., *Acta historiam confinii militaris Croatici illustrantia*, 3 vols, Zagreb, 1884-89, vol. III, pp. 388-90. See also G. Ivić, 'Dolazak uskoka u Žumberak' (*Vjesnik Kraljevsko Hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog zemalskog arhiva*, ix, Zagreb, 1907, pp. 122-24 and xx, 1918).

⁶⁵ The 1551 'Musterregister' of Senj Uskoks lists 315 men paid between eight and twenty-four florins a month — see A. Ivić, 'Prelozi za povijest Hrvatski i Slavonije u xvi i xvii vijeku' (*Starine*, xxxv, 1916, pp. 296-301). The rate, however, did not remain stable and was irregularly, indeed rarely, paid: see Gigante, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Rački, *op. cit.*, p. 192; Pisani's relation in Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 18; also Rothenberg, *op. cit.*, e.g. p. 53.

⁶⁶ Letter of 19 October 1530: Laszowski, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 439-40.

⁶⁷ Lopašić, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 138-40.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 157.

⁶⁹ Minuci, *op. cit.*, p. 16. So successful was this new 'trade', he continues, that at times the women of Senj might be 'clad in scarlet and silk' and make merry 'without having to touch distaff or spindle' (pp. 16-17), although elsewhere he states that he had never met an Uskok who had died rich. Just as the raiders preyed on communities up and down the coast, so those who commanded at Senj on behalf of the Austrians, effectively preyed on the

This suggests that those merchants who remained in Senj encouraged and even financed Uskok raids. Indeed other sources indicate that the forays of the Senj Uskoks were supported by public subscriptions from all who were able to pay, including priests, friars and the Captain of Senj himself.⁷⁰ If so, the raids have a flavour of the joint-stock enterprise about them — although it is possible that some Senjans invested primarily in order to divert the attentions of the crowd of hungry ruffians from themselves and their property. It is certain, however, that in the course of the sixteenth century the economy of Senj changed from one based primarily on trade to one based on predatory enterprise.⁷¹ Just as the Morlach pastoralists of the interior had turned to brigandage, developing an ethos according to which they allegedly thought it ‘most laudable to live by robbery’,⁷² so the people of Senj were forced by the disruption of war to convert it into a pirate base (which, ironically, served to prolong the violence in the area and extend it).

If the formerly solid citizens of Senj joined with the Uskoks, either personally or by proxy, so did the local clergy. Venetians believed that they blessed raiding expeditions, took a tithe of the proceeds, and even participated in forays. The records of apostolic visitations to the region certainly lend credibility to this view. Not only do the inventories of plate and valuables indicate that the Senj diocese was markedly less affluent than its neighbours, but a report of 1588 states that its ten priests (seven of whom resided in the town) were ‘very poor’.⁷³ Their poverty reflected the poverty of the population as a whole.

Uskoks. Soon after a raid they found it necessary to mount another ‘or die of hunger; for, having contributed so much to satiate the greed of their Captain and various others who commanded him, and to maintain themselves in favour at the . . . Imperial court’ they were soon left with nothing ‘as may be guessed from the poverty and misery in which they lived’ (ibid., p. 23). Pisani suggests much the same: see Novak, op. cit., vol. vi, pp. 13–14.

⁷⁰ See Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 391.

⁷¹ Compare the changing economic base of the Senjans with that of the Nepalese Gurungs who, also in conditions of increasing population pressure, turned from pastoralism to paddy cultivation and the export of male labour within four generations (Alan Macfarlane, *Resources and Population: A Study of the Gurungs of Nepal*, Cambridge, 1976). Most of those who became Uskoks also changed from pastoralism (but also agricultural and urban pursuits) to mercenary service and piracy within an even shorter time scale. Macfarlane holds population growth to have been the major factor determining social and cultural as well as economic change. In the case of the Senj Uskoks the pressure seems to have been caused by diminishing resources due to the disruption of warfare and to a degree of population growth due to immigration rather than natural increase. The social and cultural consequences, however, present an interesting and largely unexplored field for inquiry.

⁷² Palladius, loc. cit.

⁷³ ASV: Fondo Pio, 276, p. 3; see also ASV: Sac. Col. Conc. Relationes Visit.: Segnien & Modrusien, Part II, nos. 1 (Vicentius, Bishop of Senj, 30 December 1615) and 2 (Marcus Antonius [de Dominis], Spalato [Split], 19 November 1600).

Furthermore, a comparison of the relative wealth of Senj and the neighbouring Venetian islands, as reflected in contemporary records, makes one of the sources of Uskok violence quite evident. A visitation to Krk in January 1603 remarks not only on its beauty, but its fertility, its abundance of cattle and '*animali parvi*' (mainly sheep and goats presumably), its honey, oil, wool, and wine 'of the best quality', and its good fishing.⁷⁴ Little wonder, then, that with such riches within close reach Uskok rustling raids on Krk and other Venetian settlements along the coast should have been so frequent. As early as 1576 Krk had been fortified 'because of the Uskoks who have often landed on the island and . . . done great damage'.⁷⁵ Competition for some scarce resource (whether material or spiritual) is basic to aggression and to human conflict. When man faces starvation he is more than usually disposed, if not to flee, then to steal and to use force against those who stand in his way. Such circumstances and reactions are well exemplified by the Senj Uskoks.

The conjuncture of recurring economic crisis at Senj, emigration from the place, and raids upon neighbours can easily be demonstrated. In 1599, for example, there was a fresh influx of immigrants into the town from Turkish territory,⁷⁶ and that summer there was an outbreak of plague.⁷⁷ No doubt this encouraged the defections from the Uskok ranks reported that June and in September;⁷⁸ but population pressure presumably remained severe, for in the summer of 1600 Venetian authorities at Zadar reported serious shortages at Senj⁷⁹ and there follow a number of reports of Uskok raiding activity,⁸⁰ despite a tight Venetian blockade.⁸¹

The timing of such expeditions suggests very strongly that food-gathering was the primary objective. A random sample of cases taken from Venetian records indicates a high level of predatory activity between the months of March and July with a smaller peak in November and December. This distribution suggests that livestock could be stolen more easily before it had been driven to, or

⁷⁴ ASV: Misc. Arm., vii, 101, ff. 369-653, especially 369v.

⁷⁵ Andrea Giustiniani, *Relazione de'Schoci di Dalmatia e Levante*, 1576 (copy), ASV, Misc. Arm., ii, 76, f. 62(94)v. The same source reports that Rab, another very productive island, also 'suffers much from Uskok rapine' (f.61 [93]r-v).

⁷⁶ VAS, PTM, b. 922: report enclosed in Donato's letter from Veglia, 12 March 1599.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Donato from Zara, 14 August 1599.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Donato from Zara, 17 June 1599, and from the San Marco Strait, 21 September 1599.

⁷⁹ VAS, PTM, b. 923: Pasqualigo from Zara, 2 July 1600.

⁸⁰ For example, a report by A. de Barnadin, who brushed with them, enclosed in Pasqualigo's letter of 27 November 1600.

⁸¹ I have omitted an account of political and diplomatic activity at this juncture. They are set out by Stanojević (*op. cit.*, pp. 178-92), although he gives no impression of the economic perspective.

after it had been driven back from summer pasture. It is also consistent with contemporary references to two traditional large-scale Uskok expeditions at Christmas and at Easter. Not, however, that they were designed merely to procure the necessaries for the two great feasts of the religious calendar, but to feed the community in the seasons of greatest scarcity, winter and spring.

A single such raid could bring in as many as 5,000 sheep and 500 head of cattle which the Uskoks would generally slaughter before transporting them back to base.⁸² Since livestock represented the region's chief productive wealth, and since, moreover, it could be immediately consumed, it is not surprising that the most frequent objective of the Senj Uskoks' forays should have been the gathering-in of cattle, sheep and cheese. Nevertheless their predatory activities had other economic objectives and took other forms.

One such was extortion from the inhabitants of Turkish territory to the south. According to a Venetian relation of 1588, the Emperor had begun to levy a tribute of one sequin per household on the herdsmen between Zadar and the River Naretva, and the Uskoks were licensed to plunder any who failed to pay.⁸³ Indeed there is evidence several years earlier of a priest in that area, Benio Rotondo of Trogir, persuading nine Morlach villages to pay protection money in return for an assurance that the Uskoks would not attack them, and of the Archduke Charles ordering his representatives at Senj to ensure that these villages remain immune.⁸⁴ The Venetians estimated that in this way the Austrians obtained 12,000 thalers a year (at a rate of three thalers per household) from Morlachs nominally under Turkish rule,⁸⁵ of which the Uskoks doubtless took a cut which helped to eke out their meagre incomes.

Kidnapping, the taking of hostages and engagement in the slave trade (which was still widely practised throughout the Mediterranean at the time) constituted another form of predatory activity. The Senj Uskoks were taking Turks captive from the earliest period of their existence, but they also kidnapped Christians to hold for ransom⁸⁶ or sell as slaves. In 1565 they captured Zuan Bembo, son of the Governor of Krk, and two abbots;⁸⁷ in 1612 they seized the Venetian Rector of Kotor, also from Krk.⁸⁸ The same year they took slaves

⁸² VAS, PTM, b. 1263, papers of January and February 1597/8 from Zara; b. 425: Venier's report from Arbe, 22 January 1612; also *ibid.*, b. 1321: Belegno from Veglia and S. Piero 28 December 1602 and 1 January 1602/3 (enclosing report from Ilovik).

⁸³ Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, pp. 12-25.

⁸⁴ Lopašić, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 81-87.

⁸⁵ Stanojević, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

⁸⁶ Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. v, pp. 179 ff.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, pp. 12-25.

⁸⁸ VAS, PTM, b. 1313: Giustiniani's report from Arbe, 24 August 1612. The Austrians eventually forced the Uskoks to free him.

from Brač,⁸⁹ and at other times held as many as 600 Christian Morlachs, both male and female, ready to sell as galley-slaves, household servants and concubines to buyers in the Italian states.⁹⁰

The Senj Uskoks also preyed upon sea-borne commerce. One serious case of piracy involving the Venetians was their capture of Zuan Contarini's ship laden with silk, corn and other Levantine goods at Christmas 1573;⁹¹ and perhaps their most remarkable exploit was the capture of a Venetian war galley in May 1613.⁹² But so far from limiting their attentions to cargoes belonging to Turks and Jews, Venetians and Ragusans, they also attacked Papal ships.⁹³ Finally, they were effective marauders overland, making forays as far south as the Naretva estuary from as early as 1542⁹⁴ (and regularly passing through Venetian territory *en route*). One of their most successful exploits in this area was their ambush of a merchant caravan in the spring of 1591.⁹⁵ But they also attacked areas as far north as Venetian Istria.⁹⁶

The Senj Uskoks could muster as many as 600 or 700 men for an expedition;⁹⁷ early in the seventeenth century they frequently went out in parties of 400,⁹⁸ and sometimes they mounted more than one operation simultaneously. If one accepts an estimate of 1585 which numbers the Uskoks at Senj as 1,000 and makes some allowance both for those in neighbouring settlements such as Brinje and Otočac and for occasional adherents from outside one concludes their total could not have exceeded 2,000.⁹⁹ If one then takes account of the fact that the defences had to be manned in the raiders' absence and that a proportion of the population must have been unfit for battle,

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, b. 426: copies of letters forwarded by Canal, June 1612. At least one was still being held as late as April 1618: *ibid.*, b. 1315, 8 April 1618, enclosed in report of Commissioners (Giustiniani and Priuli), 11 April 1618.

⁹⁰ Other examples include the recovery of thirteen Turkish and thirty-eight Morlach captives (Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 21); the kidnapping of shepherds (VAS: *Secreta: Materie Miste Notabile*, b. 126: reports from Sebenico, April 1601 and May 1603); other kidnapping: VAS, PTM, b. 1261: enclosure forwarded with Tiepolo's report of 5 July 1592; *ibid.*, b. 426: copy of letter from Count and Captain of Arbe enclosed in Canal's report from Zara, 16 August 1612.

⁹¹ VAS, Senato: *Secreta: Registro* 79, p. 159. After much diplomatic activity the ship was eventually returned.

⁹² VAS, PTM, b. 427: Pasqualigo's correspondence, Zara, 13 and 15 May 1613. The full scale and success of Uskok buccaneering and wrecking activities have been fully described by A. Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice 1585-1615*, London, 1966.

⁹³ Despite agreements not to do so concluded in 1579-80 (Horvath, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 25-26; Rački, *loc. cit.*) the attacks were renewed c. 1586: see ASV, Garampi index.

⁹⁴ VAS: Senato: *Secreta, Deliberazioni*, R.62, 1. Also into Ragusan territory.

⁹⁵ VAS, PTM, b. 415: copy of report by cavalry commander, 7 June 1591.

⁹⁶ For example, the raid of September 1612: Miroslav Bertosa, *La Guerra degli Usocchi e la Rovina dell' Economia Istriana*, Trieste, 1974, p. 45.

⁹⁷ Minuci, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Bib. Marc, It. vii, 1847 (= 9617), f. 9^v; VAS, PTM, b. 423: Venier's reports from Zara and Spalato, 31 August and 31 October 1609.

⁹⁹ See R. and E. Eickhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 201; also the estimate by Gigante, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

it becomes apparent that the Senj Uskoks were a community geared to a perpetual state of almost total war. Confirmation is lent to this conclusion by the high Uskok casualty rate and by the imbalance between the sexes. Indeed there were so few women at Senj that a custom arose obliging Uskok widows to remarry.¹⁰⁰ In 1601 the community included only some 200 women, some of them the widows of three or four husbands.¹⁰¹

The Uskoks and frontier groups like them waged what was tantamount to a chaotic war directed almost indiscriminately against the population of the Dalmatian coast whatever their allegiance; and the effects on the region were both destructive and disruptive. Pisani, Captain of a Venetian task force sent out to counter the Uskoks, reported in 1588 that they had so 'totally demoralized' the Doge's subjects along the coast that, rather than show any resistance when the raiders came, they would flee into the hills, so great was their fear of the Uskoks who would treat them with 'great cruelty . . . depriving them of life and setting fire to their poor houses'.¹⁰²

This terror served both to maintain Uskok numbers and to increase the number of predators in the region. In 1597, for example, when the Uskoks were plundering Dalmatia and Istria, destroying crops, 'many peasant joined them out of naked necessity, and having been plundered, became plunderers themselves'.¹⁰³ A similar result obtained in the Turkish territories which the Uskoks raided. The inhabitants of 'all that country . . . from the mouth of the Naretva to the borders of Omiš,' wrote Pisani, were not only 'tributories of the Senj Uskoks' (and despoiled by them) but 'turn Uskok themselves when it suits them'.¹⁰⁴ One celebrated Uskok leader, Juriša Hajduk (one of the ringleaders concerned in Rabatta's murder and a thorn in the side of successive Venetian commanders in Dalmatia and the Adriatic until 1620) was himself, according to Minuci, 'a husbandman (*zappatore*) turned robber'.¹⁰⁵

Yet the Senj Uskoks were not responsible for all the troubles in the region. The local Morlachs, as has already been pointed out,¹⁰⁶ had been raiders and cattle-rustlers before them; and the Liburnians and Narentines had been noted for piracy centuries before that. What we observe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is

¹⁰⁰ Minuci, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ Relation of V. Barbaro, 25 April 1601: Venice Correr Library, Cod. Cocogna 2855, ff. 68^{r-v} and 74. One suspects that a degree of sexual freedom obtained among them, as it did among other piratical or pastoral groups, and among their predecessors in the area, the Liburnians, who also held their women in common: see Wilkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-87.

¹⁰² Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 20.

¹⁰³ Horvath, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 156.

¹⁰⁴ Novak, *op. cit.*, vol. vi, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Minuci, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁶ See note 58 above.

perhaps only an increase of small-scale organized violence which had long been endemic in the area. Seen in this light the constant predatory warfare in this period might have owed much less to the struggles between Turkey and Austria and Austria and Venice than many historians assume. To be sure, the great powers contributed to the disturbances, but they were also drawn into conflict by the conditions of disorder. The wars between the states were superimposed, as it were, upon a series of petty local wars. The involvement of states served ultimately to polarize the local belligerents and to introduce warfare on a larger and more organized scale. Nevertheless during the period under discussion the frontiers between states did not determine allegiances in any rigid way. Although Uskoks and Morlachs are generally distinguished from one another in the literature, for example, many Uskoks were Morlachs. As one late sixteenth-century source points out Morlachs were the Uskoks' 'parents and friends (albeit) subject to the Turks';¹⁰⁷ and others of them had 'friends and parents' in Venetian Dalmatia.¹⁰⁸

Uskoks and Morlachs were not invariably on friendly terms, of course. Uskoks sold Morlachs into slavery and collected tribute from them, after all. Moreover the nature of the war was such as to divide kinsman from kinsman and set fathers against sons. One curious illustration of this phenomenon is provided by the great raid led by the Uskok chief Andija Frletić in January 1612. It brought in a goodly haul of livestock, but the bulk of it was stolen from Andija's own father,¹⁰⁹ a 'Turk'.

Furthermore, it is difficult to distinguish Uskoks from Martolos (their counterparts on the Turkish side), in terms of language, religion or life style. A force of Christians employed by the Turks as spies, messengers, border guards and *akınçı* (that is, mounted scouts and raiders), some of them on a salaried basis,¹¹⁰ the Martolos operated in much the same way as the Senj Uskoks.¹¹¹ Miloš Zapanović, who was described in a Venetian report as a 'Turkish subject' and 'famous chief of thieves',¹¹² and the Uskok bandit Juriša Hajduk were two of the same kind. Furthermore, there is

¹⁰⁷ VAS, Senato, Secreta: Materie Miste Notabile, b. 27: Conte Gabado Pier, undated (c.1588-92).

¹⁰⁸ Relation of Benedetto Mor, Provveditor-General in Dalmatia, 1595: Novak, op. cit., vol. v, pp. 123-47.

¹⁰⁹ VAS, PTM, b. 425: Venier's report of 29 January 1612.

¹¹⁰ Midhat Sertoglu, *Resimli Osmanli Tareki Anseklopedu*, Istanbul, 1958; see also Vasić, op. cit. Although their creation has been attributed (by Minuci and others) to a Turkish reaction to Uskok activity, they had existed in the fifteenth century, and had been noted by the Venetians in the neighbourhood of Klis in 1510: see Sanuto, op. cit., vol. x, col. 207.

¹¹¹ For example, the Venetian report of a Turkish raid: VAS, PTM, b. 427, 23 March 1613.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, b. 60: two despatches from Zorzi at Zara, 30 May 1620.

evidence to suggest that some Uskoks were runaway Martolos;¹¹³ and it is probable that some Martolos were Uskok deserters. Similarly, many Venetian galley-slaves and soldiers who came from Dalmatia escaped and joined the Senj Uskoks when they were posted back to the area, increasingly so since conditions of service deteriorated steadily over the period. Albanian and Greek mercenaries also deserted the Venetians;¹¹⁴ and there are reports of English Uskoks, some allegedly of noble birth, being executed by the Venetians.¹¹⁵

In sum, people of the same ethnicity, religion, culture and kin were distributed on both sides of each border, Austrian, Turkish, and Venetian, and the Senj Uskoks had allies as well as enemies in both opposing camps. Only inertia, the balance of terror and the relative prospects of pay and plunder determined the allegiances of the unfortunate people of the region. The Uskoks' raiding activities were essentially devoid of ideological objectives; and the populations of Turkish and Venetian territory in the vicinity who joined them or 'went Uskok' on their own accounts did so primarily out of terror, destitution, homelessness or greed rather than any political commitment.

The Senj Uskoks were both a cause and a reflection of instability in the area. However, they were not an 'exceptional historical phenomenon' as has recently been suggested.¹¹⁶ Throughout the unstable border zones in the early modern period, from the Mediterranean to the Urals, very similar groups of pirates, bandits and servicemen arose — Martolos, *hajduk*,¹¹⁷ Crimean Tatars who mounted raids independently of the Khan, and the various communities of Cossacks. Fernand Braudel has noticed similarities between such groups, more particularly as specialists in a peculiar kind of

¹¹³ See Bib. Marc., It. vii, 914 (= 8952): 'Delle ragione che ha la Serenissima Sr. Venetiani . . . il Golfo Adriatico', f. 123^v. See also note 30 above.

¹¹⁴ See Lopašić, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 40–48, cited by Rothenberg, 'Venice and the Uskoks of Senj 1537–1618' (*Journal of Modern History*, 2, Chicago, 1961); Kravjanszky, loc. cit.

¹¹⁵ Wilkinson, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 389–90 quoting Brulart, French ambassador to Venice in 1618. The tale is not improbable. English pirates were active in the Mediterranean from the 1580s (see Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols, London, 1971–72, vol. I, p. 629), and the Venetians themselves were employing a force of mercenaries under a Colonel Peyton in the Adriatic early in 1620 (see VAS, PTM, b. 60: Zorzi from Zara, 2 March 1620). A Scot had encountered the Uskoks in 1616 and left an account of his experience (William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures . . .*, London, 1632). Some Englishmen who served with the Venetian forces evidently turned *venturini*: see V. Kostić, 'Jedan škot među uskokima početkom xvii veka', *Senjski zbornik*, III, pp. 88–92.

¹¹⁶ Stanojević, op. cit., p. 297 — in an otherwise valuable and original study.

¹¹⁷ The *yataks* who worked with and sheltered *hajduk* provide a parallel with the *venturini* of the Venetian islands (see Vucinich, op. cit., p. 49); and the Venetian attempt to colonize *hajduk* in the Pula area in the 1670s (see M. Bertoša, 'Hajduč epizoda naseljavanja Puljštine 1671–5: Prilog problematici organizirane kolonizacije Metlačke Istre', *Jadranski zbornik*, VIII, 1973, p. 105–60) provides a parallel with Austrian and Russian resettlements of Uskoks and Cossacks.

warfare.¹¹⁸ Gunther Rothenberg also regards them as members of a common category, again in a military context.¹¹⁹ The parallels, however, were more numerous and some were noted by contemporaries.

A Venetian writer of the sixteenth century commented that the Uskoks were like the Polish Cossacks, not only in language but in customs (*moribus*).¹²⁰ Polo Minio, in a relation of 1620, noted similarities between the boats used by the Uskoks and the Zaporozhian Cossacks, and the piratical nature of both;¹²¹ and Cossacks also figure in Minuci's account of the Uskoks.¹²² Of course there were also significant differences between Uskoks and Cossacks. Unlike coastal Croatia, for example, most of the Cossack lands were suitable for agriculture. Moreover, whereas the Cossacks of the Don and Zaporozh'e pioneered virgin, virtually unpopulated territory, the Senj Uskoks sprang up over an existing society; and while the Cossacks settled areas initially far distant from the centralizing pull of Moscow, the Uskoks lived in much greater proximity to the Austrian and Venetian centres of power. Nevertheless the similarities are striking and in their social aspects especially probably outweigh the differences.

Piracy, cattle-raiding, the collection of tribute and the universal bearing of arms which these occupations imply were features of both Cossack and Uskok societies. So also were seasonal participation, a marked imbalance between the sexes and the virtual absence of agricultural pursuits. Furthermore, both Uskok and Cossack communities and war bands were essentially self-governing, at least in so far as Uskok *vojvode* and Cossack *atamany* were elected. Both Uskoks and Cossacks constituted free social formations which sprang up spontaneously in frontier zones which were also power vacuums, essentially devoid of effective state control; and although both took service as frontier guards and mercenaries, they were notoriously unstable in their allegiances. Both originated largely as refugees and runaways, and both, partly by dint of forced resettlements and despite fierce resistance, were finally merged into the peasantry at large. Yet both bequeathed popular legends glorifying freedom to the poor of Russia, the Ukraine and Croatia.

In sum, the Uskoks' similarities to other groups in function, structure and behaviour suggest that rather than being considered

¹¹⁸ Braudel, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 1196.

¹¹⁹ Rothenberg, *Austrian Military Border*, p. 125.

¹²⁰ Bib. Marc. It. VII, 914 (= 8592), f. 125v.

¹²¹ Joseph Fiedler, *Die Relationen der Botschafter Venedigs über Deutschland und Österreich im 17. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols, Vienna, 1866-67, vol. I, pp. 92-93.

¹²² Minuci, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-27.

as a discrete entity, within a regional or national context, or else from the standpoint of great powers attempting to bring order and stability to their vulnerable and anarchic borders (which has been the historiographical trend to date), they merit consideration as part of a general social phenomenon characteristic of the Slavic-Turkish borderlands as a whole during the period.

Finally, some more general questions can be addressed in respect of the situation in the Balkans from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. During this time this region constituted a borderland reflecting not only discontinuities in space but also discontinuities in time in so far as social, economic and cultural trends were interrupted by war. But what were the sources of the anarchic wars which plagued this sector of Eastern Europe? Was it essentially a clash between cultures and power structures representing the Christian and the Muslim worlds? Was it the outcome of a series of local pressures caused by a recurring imbalance between population and resources spilling over into violence? Or was it a reverberation of crises farther afield, another example, perhaps of the ripple effect of population displacements described by Frederick Teggart in his study of disturbances on the frontiers of the Roman Empire¹²³ or, in another sense, as Fernand Braudel implies in attributing the general outbreak of guerrilla warfare, piracy and brigandage in the Mediterranean in the latter half of the sixteenth century to the break-up or decline of great empires, Turkish, Spanish, Indian, and Chinese?¹²⁴

More specifically, Braudel offers an explanation in terms of the discontinuity of unexpected peace. Referring to the end of the general war in the Mediterranean in 1574 he writes:

We should make it clear which kind of war we mean. Regular war maintained at great expense by the authoritarian expansion of major states . . . came to an end. But the living materials of that war, the men who could no longer be kept in the war fleets by what had become inadequate rewards and wages . . . were driven to a life of roving by the liquidation of international war. . . . Brigandage subsumed, as it were, the energies of a social war which never surfaced. Brigandage consumed the passions that would in other times have gone into a crusade or Jihād.¹²⁵

Each of these ideas has a certain relevance. Yet none alone can provide an adequate explanation of the Uskoks' existence and activity. The anarchy of maritime Croatia, an anarchy which was personified by the Senj Uskoks, derived in part, to be sure, from the

¹²³ Frederick J. Teggart, *Rome and China: A Study of Correlations in Historical Events*, Berkeley, 1939.

¹²⁴ Braudel, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 865, note 127.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 890.

failure of great empires, Turkish, Austrian and Venetian, to impose order on an area difficult of access which provided ideal terrain for bandits or guerrillas; in part also from a series of population movements; but essentially from the creation, through more or less perpetual warfare, of hosts of displaced and impoverished people who coalesced in marauding packs to wage their own private wars for that most basic of all human objectives, subsistence.