

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Program  
Dayton Peace Accords Series

**DR. MATE GRANIĆ**

*Interviewed by: Tom Selinger  
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**INTERVIEW**

*Q: This is Tom Selinger with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training with Dr. Mate Granić of Croatia. It's May 23, 2025. We're here to talk about the Dayton Peace Accords. Dr. Granić, can you start by telling us the scene before Dayton? I know you were very involved in the lead up. What was the scene like from your perch as the foreign minister of Croatia?*

GRANIĆ: In 1991, I was a medical doctor, university professor, WHO [World Health Organization] consultant, dean of the medical faculty at the University of Zagreb, and postdoctoral fellowship at the Joslin Clinic, Harvard Medical School. As a diabetologist, I spent five months in Lexington, Kentucky at the Kentucky Diabetes Federation. President when the war started in Croatia—that was great Serbian aggression on Croatia by Slobodan Milošević and former JNA [Yugoslav People's Army]. President Tuđman invited me to be deputy prime minister, after fifteen days, deputy president of the national war committee. I was also responsible for the crisis region. The refugees—

*Q: People fleeing the Krajna region—*

GRANIĆ: Detainees. Missing persons. Displaced persons. I was chief negotiator with the former Yugoslav army and the European monitoring mission. Croatia defended herself. Croatia was recognized by the European Union on January 15, 1992. Before the war, Croatia supported the referendum of independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the success of the referendum, Croatia was the first country to send an ambassador to Sarajevo. All humanitarian and military help for Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks came to Bosnia and Herzegovina through Croatia. And what is very important—

*Q: Was this during the arms embargo as well?*

GRANIĆ: Yes. Additionally, 700,000 refugees Croatia accepted. Bosniaks and the Croats. Plus, 300,000 Bosniak and the Croats, predominantly Bosniak, came from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia and went to a third country.

*Q: So that refugee flow is coming through—*

GRANIĆ: The war between the Croats and Bosniaks additionally complicated the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were absolutely unhappy concerning this war. I was elected as the foreign minister and deputy minister of the government of Croatia on June 1, 1993. During June 1993, I had a meeting with Madeleine Albright, Klaus Kinkel, Alois Mock, Jean-Louis Tauran, [Andrei] Kozyrev, foreign minister of Russia, and the foreign minister of China. I saw that without stopping the war between the Croats and the Bosniaks, there would be nothing. With Croats and Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All my efforts after that was how to stop the war between the Croats and the Bosniaks. I had full support of President Tuđman.

On July 7, 1993, as a foreign minister, I organized in Makarska the meeting on the highest level about the humanitarian issue. Exchange the detainees and freedom for the humanitarian convoys. Very successful. In August, I had a meeting with the prime minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina for seven days in Zagreb. We prepared declarations, the so-called Geneva Declaration, with President Tuđman and President Izetbegović, which was signed on September 14. In November, I visited Sarajevo during the war and signed the so-called Sarajevo Declaration. The Croats accepted and Croatia supported all peace plans. Cutileiro plan, Vance-Owen plan, and Owen-Stoltenberg plan. Bosniak refused Cutileiro and Owen-Stoltenberg but accepted the Vance-Owen plan. Serbs refused the Vance-Owen plan.

The last meeting of the peace conference in Geneva was on January 16, 1994. Two days later, on January 19, Ambassador Žužul, Croatian ambassador in Geneva, organized a meeting between me and special envoy of President Clinton, Charles Redman. That was the dinner in the Hilton Hotel, Geneva. It was a long dinner. Five hours. At this meeting, I proposed a model on how to stop the war between the Croats and the Bosniaks and how to establish the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. After two days, President Clinton accepted. I had full support of President Tuđman, but President Clinton accepted this plan. After that, we continued the work on the preparation for the Washington negotiation.

On February 4, 1994, I visited the Holy See. I had a meeting with Jean-Louis Tauran, my dear friend, Cardinal Sodano, and a meeting with Holy Father for forty-five minutes. A regular meeting with Holy Father is ten minutes. Maximum fifteen minutes. And in one moment, Holy Father spoke a fifteen minute monologue with a practically strong suggestion that President Tuđman and I must stop the war between the Bosniaks and the Croats. He told me that radical Islam is the most dangerous for the whole world. Not Islam as a brother religion. When I returned to Zagreb, I told President Tuđman all the messages from Holy See. After three days, Croats changed the leader, Mate Boban, with Krešimir Zubak.

*Q: That was a result of that.*

GRANIĆ: Yes. That was a very important suggestion from the Holy See. President

Tuđman accepted. I personally was the chief of delegation in Livno at the HDZ [Croatian Democratic Union] meeting when the HDZ–Croatian Republic Herzeg Bosna changed the leader. On February 23, 1994, President Tuđman proposed to me that I visit Paris, London, Bonn, and Holy See to explain and present the Croatian model and plan on how to stop the war between the Croats and the Muslims. One day after I visited Bonn, 11:00 am lunch with Klaus Kinkel, 2:30 pm lunch in one restaurant near the airport in Rome with Minister Andreatta, 5:30 pm meeting in Holy See with Jean-Louis Turan, and dinner with ambassadors 9:30 pm in Geneva. Four countries in one day.

*Q: This is diplomacy.*

GRANIĆ: And the next day in London. Malcom Rifkind during the meeting in London warned [Warren] Christopher, Secretary of State, called me and invited me immediately to Washington. I told him that it was impossible. I must return to Zagreb to discuss law with the president. I had a meeting at noon with the president until 2:00 am. At 7:00 a.m., I was on the plane.

*Q: To go to Washington.*

GRANIĆ: To go to Washington. The Washington Agreement started the day after. A major problem was the definition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Previously the definition of the Federation and the definition of the future Bosnia and Herzegovina. Haris Silajdžić, prime minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, leader of the Bosniaks, proposed a unitary civil state. I was strongly against it. Bosnia and Herzegovina, for historical reasons, especially if we want to stop the war, must be an integral country of three constituent people. All other citizens must have the same civil and human rights. Not any difference.

On the second day, when the situation was dramatic, the secretary of state of the United States, Warren Christopher, my dear friend, invited me to lunch. After a long two hour lunch, he accepted my arguments. After that, Bosnia accepted, we finished Washington negotiations, and signed a preliminary agreement on March 1, 1994. In twenty-four hours, we stopped the war between the Bosniaks and the Croats. On March 18, President Tuđman, President Izetbegović, and Krešimir Zubak, the new leader of the Croats, signed the final agreement. After that, the credibility of Croatia, especially international credibility of Croatia, was very high.

*Q: This was an important precursor to the negotiations at Dayton.*

GRANIĆ: Yes. Something that is very important to tell is that Croatia 1991, beginning of 1992, accepted the Vance plan and UN [United Nations] peace forces. UNPROFOR [United Nations Protection Force]. We had the four UNPA [UN Protected Area] zones. The UN Security Council accepted on March 1, 1993 resolution the situation on occupied territory of Croatia. They proclaimed UNPA zones occupied territory of the Republic of Croatia and repeated the General Assembly meeting in December 1994. That was practically a legal basis for military operations, *Flesh and Storm*. Naturally, why? Because local Serbs refused any serious negotiations. Peter Galbraith, American

ambassador, started with the so-called Z4 plan, with a large autonomy for the local Serbs. But what happened? On January 31, 1995, local Serbs refused leader Matic to accept the proposal for the plan.

*Q: For Z4?*

GRANIĆ: Yeah. After that, it was easy to see that they don't want any kind of local autonomy within Croatia. They want to be a part of Great Serbia. August 16, 1995, after Srebrenica tragedy and genocide, came President Demirel to visit President Tuđman on Brijuni Island. I was with the president and Minister of Defense Šušak. President Demirel of Turkey, prayed to President Tuđman, me, and Minister Šušak that we help Bosniaks. That the Bosniaks are on their knees. President Tuđman told me when President Demirel left Brijuni Island that I should propose.

The next day, I proposed a meeting between President Tuđman and President Izetbegović. At 4:00 pm, President Demirel called President Izetbegović. He accepted immediately. I organized the meeting in Split. I told President Izetbegović that he should send a letter to the President and that in the letter he must ask President Tuđman for military help concerning international law. He immediately sent the letter on the same day to President Tuđman and with a request for military help. We organized it. I prepared the declaration and agreement in Split.

On July 22, 1995, we signed the Split declaration. On the basis of the Split declaration four days later, the Croatian army with HVO [Croatian Defence Council] had started the so-called \_\_\_\_\_ operation. The Croatian army helped the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and HVO in liberating more than 20 percent of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This prevented the fall of Bihać and the tragedy of Bihać. That was the basis for the Dayton agreement. What happened? The Croatian army was twenty kilometers near Banja Luka. Banja Luka was in the house, but the Americans stopped us. The Secretary of State called me for a forty-five minute telephone call. Richard Holbrooke and Peter Galbraith stopped President Tuđman. And plus General [Wesley] Clark and Minister of Defense Šušak. President Tuđman accepted the American suggestion. We stopped.

*Q: Why did they want you to stop?*

GRANIĆ: We stopped because America was the strongest partner of Croatia. That was the reason. After that, Holbrooke started to work in summer and invited us to Dayton. In Dayton, the first two days, we resolved the problem of peaceful reintegration, Danube region. On this basis, Ambassador Galbraith signed with Hrvoje Šarinić and the representative of Serbs, the so-called Erdut Agreement for the peaceful integration. We got the American diplomat and General Jacques Paul Klein, an excellent person. Peaceful integration is one of the most successful operations of the UN.

*Q: Yeah why do you think it was so successful?*

GRANIĆ: Successful because of excellent leadership. And Croatia was strong.

*Q: Yes, okay, you were in a better position.*

GRANIĆ: Additionally, after that, we discussed Mostar, established the city, and they knew the model. We resolved the problem of Mostar. Frame agreement, military agreement, and the biggest problem was delineation between *Republic of Srpska* and Federation.

*Q: The famous 49 percent, 51 percent.*

GRANIĆ: Yes. 51 - 49. And two days before the end of the negotiations, the Americans told us that they would at 11:00 am give us the proposal. By 2:00 pm, no. By 8:00 pm, no. By 11:00 pm, no. So at 2:00 am, President Tuđman said, "We are going to sleep." At 4:00 am, Christopher Hill told me that I should come to the American pavilion. I came at 4:30 am. In the room were Holbrooke, Warren Christopher, Silajdžić, Milošević, [sic] two generals, one was Koerning, famous, and some other generals. Holbrooke offered me champagne. I told him, "No, I must see." When I saw the plan, I immediately refused. I told him, "No, zero, zero, point zero chance that we would accept this."

*Q: Why was that?*

GRANIĆ: We discussed it for two hours. I asked Christopher, Warren Christopher, secretary of state, who negotiated the plan. He told me, Milošević, Silajdžić, and Holbrooke. I refused. At 6:00 am, I informed President Tuđman, and he told me that I will not go. He strongly supported my position. But President Izetbegović came.

*Q: And why did you refuse to accept that plan?*

GRANIĆ: Because the plan was strongly in favor of Bosnian Serbs. Why? Because Bosnian Serbs accepted the Bosniak proposal for Sarajevo, and the Croats paid the price.

*Q: So they took territory from the Croats?*

GRANIĆ: Yes. And I asked President Izetbegović, "Do you agree with the plan?" And he said, "No." The situation was definitely that that would be a full failure of the Dayton negotiations. At 3:00 pm, at lunch, Holbrooke came to me. He asked me, "Is there any chance?" "Yes, but you must give us a much better proposal." He told me, "You must give us—" At 4:00 pm, we immediately gave the Croatian side—naturally, I spoke with President Tuđman. At 5:00 pm, the Americans accepted the southwest border and north from Posavina. Wesley Clark was at this meeting. And Odžak, Orašje in the Federation, other parts in Bosnia, Brčko district. At 5:30 pm, President Clinton called President Tuđman. They spoke for half an hour. After that, President Tuđman accepted the American plan. A day later, we signed the agreement. And Bosnia and Herzegovina, a territorial integral country with two entities, the *Republic of Srpska* and the Federation of Bosnia, three constituent people, stopped the war, and offered the chance for the better

future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That's all. In Paris, December 14 was the final signing of the agreement.

*Q: Excellent. Thank you so much.*

*End of interview*