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**WIESENTHAL CENTER HARSHLY CRITICIZES REMARKS IN BUENOS AIRES BY CROATIAN PRESIDENT EXPRESSING PRIDE IN CROATIAN IMMIGRANTS TO ARGENTINA, AMONG THEM NOTORIOUS WAR CRIMINALS**

Jerusalem-The Simon Wiesenthal Center today harshly criticized public remarks made earlier this week in Buenos Aires by visiting Croatian President Kolinda Grobar Kitarović who expressed pride in "all the generations of Croats who arrived in Argentina," despite the fact that among these immigrants were numerous notorious Ustasha (Croatian fascist) war criminals.

In a letter sent today to the President by the Center's chief Nazi-hunter and director of Eastern European Affairs Dr. Efraim Zuroff, the names of several of the most prominent of these war criminals, among them the notorious Croatian head of state during World War II Ante Pavelić, head of the Ustasha secret police Eugen Dido Kvaternik, and Jasenovać commander Dinko Sakić were specifically mentioned.

According to research by Argentinian journalist Uki Goni in his monumental study of the escape of Nazi war criminals to Argentina, **The Real Odessa; Smuggling the Nazis to Peron's Argentina** (Granta Books, 2002), estimates that the number of Ustasha criminals who fled to Argentina was at least 100, among them numerous leading members of the Ustasha regime.

According to Zuroff:

"President Grabar-Kitarović's remarks constitute a blanket whitewash of some of the worst criminals of World War II. The only question is whether her statement stemmed from admiration for these murderous Ustasha or ignorance of their postwar escape."

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