
Interview: Prof. Franjo Zenko

Serbia's unadmitted war aims in Croatia

The chairman of the great council of the Croatian Social Liberal Party spoke to EIR's Gabriele Liebig at a meeting of the Thom- as Dehler Stiftung in Lustheim near Munich on Nov. 23.

EIR: What can you say about the situation in Croatia, and what do you think are the Army's next targets?

Zenko: As always before, since the cease-fire broke down, the situation has gotten worse, because the Army always uses the cease-fire to put its weapons in order and collect its forces. As Liberals we look to Europe for hope and in our appeals to Europe's politicians we have always stressed that an authority based outside Yugoslavia is needed in order to reach a peaceful solution of the conflict. This internationalization unfortunately has come very late. The top European politicians had to go through a hard learning process in order to appreciate the situation in the republics. There were certainly experts, but this was a small handful of journalists and cabinet ministers; the public knew nothing about real conditions in the republics. When you talk to Europeans, you see that they are emotionally very pro-Croatian, but the ignorance about Croatia is enormous. So our job is to reduce this ignorance as fast as possible.

EIR: Internationalization of the conflict depends on Croatia being recognized. So far, only the Baltic states have done so. Are you hoping for recognition from other nations?

Zenko: There have been many statements by reasonable politicians, but up to now no coherent decision has been made to resolve the conflict. I think that the time has come where people have to be very stringent and we need very clear concepts, about what we are dealing with. One thing that this seminar has crystallized is that first, recognition must take place, so that further steps can be taken, for example, the sending-in of U.N. troops. Without recognizing Croatia there is no basis in international law for this. If this were clarified, and Blue Helmets were sent in, then it would have to be clearly spelled out what role they should play and where. Our position is plain, that these troops must only be stationed on the border between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The border with Serbia is very short. Our problem arises with the groups of Serbians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The U.N. troops must be stationed at this border, and troops from both sides have to be withdrawn from a 20 km zone around the border, so that the U.N. troops can be safe there. Under the control of

the U.N. troops, then, a fully normal, civilian administration must arise, and democratic institutions built up there.

EIR: Do you see any chance that the federal government in Germany will recognize your country?

Zenko: I took part a few days ago in a panel in Meersburg on the Bodensee. A state secretary of the foreign ministry also took part. She told the public that by Dec. 10 Croatia and Slovenia would be recognized by the federal government. According to my information other countries would then join this step. First Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark and then other countries. Also the U.S. Congress has hotly debated this issue.

EIR: How do you see the military situation, especially around Osijek?

Zenko: The military situation has gotten much worse for Croatia, since after Vukovar fell, the Yugoslav Army has been able to concentrate around cities like Osijek and has heavily bombarded it. The war aims of the Army are divided into three parts: a maximum, a minimum, and a middle option. Their maximum goal is to set up Yugoslavia again with its old borders, except Slovenia. A general said a few days ago that even Slovenia would return to Yugoslavia. The minimum goal would be that Serbia joins with Montenegro, plus the two [Serbian-ruled] provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. The middle option would consist of a mini-Yugoslavia, to include Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, plus then Macedonia. This would see itself as the sequel to the old Yugoslavia under international law. Areas such as Krajina, Knin, and East Slavonia would be drawn in, which are now under Army and Serbian Chetnik control. These are the war aims, which we have deduced from the speeches and interviews, but from the official Serbian side or the Army there is no explicit aim. They deny that a war is being waged, to avoid being blamed internationally by admitting to a war of aggression. The Serbian soldiers complain that they themselves do not know what they are fighting for, and many are preparing to desert from the Army.

EIR: How is the Yugoslav Army doing for arms and matériel supplies under the U.N. embargo?

Zenko: As far as we know, they still have plenty of loopholes through which the Army gets supplied. Especially with spare parts, because the complicated weapons systems bought abroad constantly need repairs. We hear that Romania is one of these loopholes. We also have confirmed reports that [Serbian Defense Minister Ante] Markovic went last spring with a delegation to Russia, to negotiate the supply of arms and strategists. After the putsch this cooperation was a bit disrupted, but we hear that the Army and Serbia still have ties through which they are getting supplied. Even U.N. Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar complained that the embargo was not being upheld.