

Peace flotilla challenges Serbian naval blockade around Dubrovnik

by Umberto Pascali

A peaceful flotilla of 50 fishing boats, led by the coastal ferry *Slavija*, has challenged the naval blockade of the Serbian Federal Navy, which is slowly killing the Croatian city of Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik, "the pearl of the Adriatic," is one of the best preserved examples of medieval and Renaissance architecture in the world, and has been declared a "world treasure" by the U.N. Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

Ironically the same United Nations is not lifting a finger while the Greater Serbian artillery, surrounding the city, is bombarding this "treasure" and starving its besieged inhabitants (see *EIR*, Nov. 1, 1991). Together with Dubrovnik, the other focus of the fury of the Federal Army is Vukovar, in Croatia's eastern region of Slavonia. The two cities are considered the key strategic points to be broken for a total conquest of Croatia. Up to now the Greater Serbians' Federal Army has occupied about one-third of the nation of Croatia.

As of Oct. 31, while the world press is drawing attention to Dubrovnik, the Army has launched the worst bombing to date against Vukovar, with cannons hammering the town, while the Air Force is massively bombing the trapped population. But still the 15,000 inhabitants are putting up a resistance "beyond belief" to more than 70 days of siege and continuing bombing (see Documentation.)

In the meantime, an epidemic of hepatitis seems to be spreading in Dubrovnik, which has been without water supply and electricity for more than four weeks. The director of the city hospital, Zoran Cikatic, warned, "This situation is critical for refugees . . . [to be] without water." A Dubrovnik citizen told the press, "There is no fruit, no milk—not even for pregnant women and babies—no medicine and the worst thing is there is no water, everyone is thirsty and everyone smells bad."

'Let the citizens of Dubrovnik return'

The aim of the Greater Serbians is to drive the Croatians out of their own country. Around 400,000 people have left their homes and cities (out of a total of 4.6 million inhabitants) terrorized by the invading army. But suddenly a movement emerged from all over Croatia, when Dubrovnik was bombed. Hundreds of people decided that they would peacefully challenge the Army. A "Committee for the Return of the Dubrovnik Citizens" organized a caravan on the spot. On

Oct. 29, the committee issued a statement calling on people to conquer their fear of the Army and to join the flotilla that left the port of Split the same day.

"The Federal Army and Serbian terrorists are forcing the citizens of Dubrovnik to leave the city and to remove the Croatian flag," The statement read. "It is time to return our debt to Dubrovnik. Not a single citizen of Dubrovnik should leave the city. Let all citizens of Dubrovnik return to the city. All Croats and good people are from now on citizens of Dubrovnik. We all leave for Dubrovnik."

No less a figure than the Federal President Stipe Mesic, was on the ferry *Slavija*, trying to force a lifting of the siege. Mesic is the Croatian representative in the eight-member collective state presidency of the former Yugoslavia, now taken over by the Greater Serbians. Also on board were Croatian Prime Minister Franjo Greguric and the Deputy Prime Minister Milan Ramlje, as well as the president of the Croatian Writers Association, Nedjeljko Fabio. Fabio issued an appeal via Croatian television addressed to "the members of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Science, leaders of the cultural society Matica Hrvatska, all scientific and cultural societies, religious leaders—especially Christian, Muslim, and Jewish—university professors and contributors in the highest scientific institutions, leading doctors, lawyers, historians, leading Croatian actors, eminent Croatian writers, leading opera singers, composers, and philosophers—friends of Dubrovnik":

"I appeal to you in the name of the committee to answer our call in this crucial and tragic moment of Dubrovnik and Croatian history and to join in the sea convoy which is going to Dubrovnik. Serbia has wished to possess Dubrovnik for 800 years. It lost all imperial and villainous wars that it fought to conquer Dubrovnik. It is now 2 kilometers from Dubrovnik and has issued an ultimatum to have the Croatian state flag removed, which ironically it called a party flag.

"Eminent people of Croatian culture, art and science! The future of Dubrovnik depends now only on our courage and determination to return."

In the meantime, diplomatic representatives from Italy, Greece, Germany, and the Netherlands, among others, using the pressure of the growing of outrage, left the Serbian capital of Belgrade and were able to visit the besieged city. Not so the hundreds of unarmed Croatians. The Federal Navy has

tried to stop the boats in the island of Mljet, 50 miles north of Dubrovnik, and to order them to turn back. President Mesic twice had to call the naval commander Adm. Stane Brovet in Belgrade, demanding that all ships be let through, affirming they were on a peace mission and unarmed. The test of wills continued in a dramatic confrontation. "I don't know what the Army is thinking," said Mesic. "It is up to them. The trip is like an experiment in which we will see whether the Army still has a tiny bit of common sense." Croatia's Prime Minister Greguric stressed that this was the first operation in a planned drive to return home tens of thousands of Croats.

Documentation

Serbia conducts its war of annihilation

EIR has received the following testimonies of Serbia's attacks on Croatia's unarmed civilians. Many of Croatia's embattled citizens have described the horrors they are victims of in letters that are getting out of the country through various networks. All emphasis is in the original.

Professors at the University of Split

Split, Croatia, Oct. 23, 1991

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As you know, a pitiless war of aggression is being waged against Croatia. Our country has been attacked by Serbia and the now totally Serb-dominated Federal Army. Their intention is to subjugate Croatia, to overthrow its democratically elected government and to force the people to remain in an oppressive, communist-inspired Yugoslavia in which Serbian hegemony would be unchallenged. To this end the borders between the republics are being redrawn by force, many cities, towns, and villages in Croatia destroyed, the economy crippled, the ports on the Adriatic blockaded by warships; the number of dead and wounded civilians increases daily, and the number of those expelled from their homes by the aggressors now approaches 300,000 and is expected by the end of this year to reach 400,000. Many of these refugees cannot return to their homes later, because their empty houses have been burned and razed to the ground (Chelije, Ravno, Vukovar, a dozen villages in Bania, etc.). Many monuments and historical edifices under the protection of Unesco as a world cultural heritage have been ravaged; over a hundred churches devastated, many of them smashed in occupied towns and villages by artillery fire; museums and

libraries have been systematically sacked and gutted. If you want to uproot a people and annex its territory, you begin by destroying its historical and cultural memory, thereby annihilating its identity. The genocide which is now carried out against the Croatian people is accompanied by a "culturocide." And now, the pearl of the Adriatic coast, the Croatian Venice, *Dubrovnik* and its surrounding region, are being attacked from the air, sea and land. The Serbo-communist invaders are destroying—with rockets, bombs, and artillery shells—hotels, ancient buildings, living quarters, marinas with pleasure boats and yachts, forests and national parks. What the Ottomans, Huns, and medieval pirates had spared is now being threatened with pillage and destruction by the Yugoslav People's Army. The people of Dubrovnik and its international cultural groups and communities have been living now for over 20 days without electricity, water, telephone communications to the outside world, with a shortage of food and medicine, and for the most part, in underground shelters day and night. The port is blockaded by Yugoslav warships which control and search, sometimes humiliatingly, each vessel which would bring succour to the old, young, sick or wounded. We kindly ask you to do your best to bring to the knowledge of the world community this bleeding of a nation, this intentional and systematic destruction of the cultural heritage of a European people, whose thousand years of cultural and religious links with Europe are now being reduced to ashes by the battalions of the last communist army in eastern Europe. Dear friends and colleagues, your urgent intervention is required because every day brings irretrievable losses in our land in which the freedom and democracy of the whole of Europe is now being defended.

The University of Split with its professors from:
Faculty of Economic Sciences
Faculty of Law
Faculty of Civil Engineering
Faculty of Mechanical, Electrical Engineering, and
Naval Architecture
Faculty of Seafaring
Faculty of Philosophy
Chemical-Technological Faculty
Rector Dr. Josip Lovric

Letter from a Vukovar girl

Date: Oct. 28, 1991

From: Croatian Girl

To: Nenad Antonic

Subject: Vukovar

Eyewitness account of the terrors of war in Croatia!

At this moment (Oct. 26) there is an artillery attack on the center of our city. What it is like on the outskirts of the city, I dare not imagine. Fighting is heavy and the dead bodies lay in the streets for days. The infrastructure of the city has been completely destroyed and the municipal workers are



A rally in Washington, D.C. last July calls for the "Yugoslav" Army to desist from aggression against Croatia, and condemns the Chetniks, the Serbian irregular troops, for atrocities.

not able to bury the dead. After a rainfall, shoes of the corpses can be seen sticking out of the shallow pits, and I have heard that during pauses in artillery fire, some corpses are simply buried in the holes created by the falling mortar shells. There are no more burial coffins after 65 days of complete blockade of Vukovar. Instead, pressed board is quickly transformed into coffins, and then they are numbered and placed in mass graves. For weeks we have been without water.

Our opinion is that *they* will not allow anybody to enter and see the truth of the destruction. People (15,000) are treated like animals and have become the dead meat of cannons. People are tortured by the fear that they will be butchered, if something is not done soon.

The population of Ilok was evacuated without resistance, and you can imagine what *they* will do with Vukovar if they succeed. The city is completely destroyed, and the civilians will not be allowed to leave and tell the true account of the events. If the conditions of life do not normalize, the people will soon be dying of infectious disease.

Hordes that surround the city are out of army control and they will cause a massacre if something is not done.

Nothing is exaggerated, not even the smallest part of this account, moreover there are no words to exactly express the situation and the living conditions in our city.

How do we appeal for help from those we do not know? Whom do we ask for help in the name of thousands of people, when all our appeals and prayers for terminating this insane bloodshed have been in vain. Death has become the most important part of our lives in this demolished town. It follows us in every step and penetrates all our thoughts and conversations.

Can anybody who has not felt at least a small part of this reality of Vukovar understand the feeling of bitterness that is developing within us? In the reality that surrounds us there is no place for lies. There is only one truth about life. The life in Vukovar is a struggle for one's doorstep.

What would be the public reaction of the developed countries if someone was to collect 2,000 children within the age groups of one month to 16 years and imprison them underground for two months with the constant threat of death if they try to go out into the light of day? Can anyone imagine this in Vienna, Paris, Berlin, London, and Washington? Maybe we are thousands of kilometers apart, but why are our hearts so distant?

Let us bring the negotiators together in Vukovar. Let them be surrounded by 2,000 exhausted children, and let them find even a single argument for the continuation of the war.

Vukovar is not only a congregation of buildings. It is a living organism that breathes. Vukovar has its life's blood, its own life which is being taken away. They are tearing its flesh and breaking its bones. While Vukovar in convulsion defends its intestines, *they*, for whom it is only a dot on the map, attack it sadistically. Give Vukovar a chance! Stop the war in Croatia!

Open letter to Bush, EC countries from a woman of Dubrovnik

Oct. 15

Open letter from Mrs. Katarina Leban of Dubrovnik to Mr. Bush, Mr. Baker, and all the heads of European Community countries:

Gentlemen, I address to you in desperation and pain, as the ruin of a woman and mother, which I'm not any more. Still yesterday I was a mother; today I am the mother of two dead sons.

Despite what my religion is teaching me about the acceptance of destiny, I cannot find the sense in this tragedy which strikes me and many other families in this sad country of Croatia.

I will tell you how everything happened: A group of youngsters 16 and 25 years of age came out for a few moments from our shelter, where hundreds of us have dwelled

Found an International Committee to Save Croatia!

The following appeal by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, president of the Schiller Institute in Germany, is being circulated for signatures internationally:

It is heart-rending to have to watch the boundless grief imposed on the almost defenseless nation of Croatia by the Serbian aggressors. At least 5,000, but probably many more people, among them many old and sick people and children, have already died; 350,000 people have lost everything and are in flight, as they face a bitter winter; 150,000 people have been blockaded for weeks, without food and medicine, exposed to merciless bombardment. Many priests and nuns have been tortured and killed.

But it is no less heart-rending, to have to witness how corrupt or indifferent western politicians are, and how emotionally dead and uninterested the majority of the people is. If genocide of such proportions can occur in the middle of Europe, without people reacting, then we are morally bankrupt.

Imagine if the German revolution had proceeded a little differently and the peaceful revolution had not led to the opening of the borders, but only to the declaration of independence of Thuringen and Sachsen-Anhalt. Imagine, that the East German Peoples Army had then taken up the most modern weapons in order to reconquer Thuringen militarily! Eisenach and Erfurt were after week-long bombing almost leveled to the ground, classical Weimar was besieged and threatened with immediate destruction, and Mainz continued under air raid. If it were your own parents whose ancestral home was bombed, would you still be so indifferent?

Or imagine, that a fascist movement had seized power

in France and proceeded in a similar manner against the resistance. Or that this happened in the country and the city which is your home. If something is criminal and genocidal here, why is it then suddenly acceptable there? This double standard is the surest measure of moral bankruptcy!

Bush and Gorbachov, without whose quiet support Belgrade should never have dared wage this aggressive war, bear responsibility for the genocide, but also Lord Carrington, who has run the negotiations at the so-called European Community peace conference in supposed British interests, so that the maximum advantage for the Serbs arose out of it. The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, whose motivation is shaped by strong economic interests in Serbia, is also to blame. The error of those who have not participated themselves in the murderous plot, is to have trusted the policy of the Anglo-Americans for one second.

Since the official policy of the West has failed so thoroughly, we the undersigned are constituting an international coalition to save Croatia. We stand for the immediate recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia in conformity with the right to self-determination stipulated in the Helsinki Accords.

We stand for Croatia being due the same rights as are due any other sovereign state, including the right to defend the life of its citizens and its territory.

We appeal to the international community of peoples, to make reparations for the injustice inflicted on Croatia, and to help it through a comprehensive reconstruction program.

We support the immediate implementation of the all-European infrastructure program of the "Productive Triangle" proposed by the American economist Lyndon LaRouche as the only possibility for restoring peace to the Balkans.

The Croatian people have a right to peace as all other people do.

for five days already. Somebody from our group, a traitor, gave the signal to the soldiers of the so-called Yugoslav Army, who were like vultures placed over us, holding us in a cage without food, water, and medicine. Immediately they started throwing bombs. Nine young persons were killed instantly, and many more were wounded. Because of the cannonade of bombs and artillery, we couldn't remove the dead bodies, nor help the wounded. Rivers of blood flowed, and all I'll ever see in the future will be blood, screaming, wailing, and crying.

Gentlemen, I, an ordinary woman, who spent all my life in hard work, raising two beautiful sons, who could be the

pride of the free world, ask you: Why haven't you stopped these horrible actions?! For sure, you were very well informed about the situation in this country, because you have your diplomatic personnel here who know the facts.

Is it really the truth that the material things are more important for you than human beings? Why, for God's sake, do you take such a responsibility for mankind, if you care so little about it? Are you really so heartless? Could you ever stand before your children and grandchildren, look them in the eyes, and tell them that you were unable to do anything?

Katarina Leban,
Dubrovnik, Croatia