
Schiller Institute Delegation in Croatia

'Respectable' again: offensive war as an instrument of policy

by Michael Liebig

From Oct. 10 to 14, two representatives of the Schiller Institute and the former Military Intelligence chief of the German Federal Army, Brig. Gen. Paul A. Scherer (ret.), visited Croatia. General Scherer advises the Schiller Institute on security policy issues. The purpose of the visit was to get as clear as possible a picture on the ground.

The Schiller Institute delegation traveled to the Croatian-Serbian Line of Demarcation: at Kupa-Brueckenkopf south of Karlovac; east toward Pakrac and Lipik in West Slavonia; in the Bosnian-Croatian border area south of Novska; in the area south of Sisak.

Although the war regions in former Yugoslavia are relatively well "known" through television newscasts and eyewitness reports in the press, yet the direct visual impression of the destruction by the war is shocking, not only for younger people, but even for those who are experienced in war. During the visit to war areas along the Serbian-Croatian Line of Demarcation, one became conscious of a somewhat schizoid frame of mind, which necessarily arises when one comes "into another world." The trip from Germany through Austria and Slovenia toward Croatia leads through peacetime normality and the beauties of nature. Even in the Croatian capital, Zagreb, everything still appears to be "normal and peaceful." Yet the many young men in uniform, the visible U.N. bases in the streets, the war refugees, and the wartime inflation cannot be overlooked. A two-hour car journey south from Zagreb then brings you to the "other world."

Scorched earth

In General Scherer's assessment, the scale of the devastation in the parts of Croatia we visited corresponds to that which characterized the most battle-torn regions of World War II. But there is one essential difference: The destruction in the Croatian battle areas has no recognizable *military* purpose. The Serbian units practiced a "scorched earth" method. The overwhelming majority of victims in Croatia over the last year, and today in Bosnia, are civilians.

During the Serbian advance in Croatia, already in the course of battle a very large number of civilians who had not fled were killed, many of them in a bestial way with knives

or bayonets. After the occupation, the remaining Croatian civilian population was targeted for extraordinarily gruesome acts of violence, in order to induce them to flee, when they were not deported in an "organized" fashion. The destruction of buildings in the contested areas which had been occupied by the Serbs, and were later won back by the Croatians, was practically total. During the Serbian retreat, all of the buildings which had not already been destroyed, were shelled, blown up, or set on fire. In West Slavonia the road from Kutia (on the Zagreb-Belgrade highway) toward Lipik and Pacrac leads for many kilometers through the typical wayside villages of the region. Along a stretch of about 10 kilometers to the right and left along the road, all of the houses, practically without exception, are destroyed. Most of the houses were shelled by tank artillery at point-blank range. Lipik was a very lovely resort city and the home of the famous Lipizzaner horse breed; two-thirds of the city is now a rubblefield.

Spas, hotels, stables, and practically all the larger houses were destroyed systematically by Serbian units. In Pakrac, a newly built area with multi-story apartment buildings had been largely destroyed. It is striking that in the Croatian cities conquered by the Serbians, just about all the churches without exception have been demolished. The nature of the damage clearly proves that it has nothing to do with a collateral result of military activity, but rather with deliberate destruction.

Thirty percent of Croatia is occupied

The Serbian units have occupied about 30% of the Croatian national territory, killed some 25,000 Croats, and driven about 500,000 from their homes. In late summer, fall, and winter 1991, this region was conquered, thanks to the artillery, tank, and air superiority of the Serbians. This was a typical offensive war, conducted in order to create a national framework for a Greater Serbia. The Serbian minority in Croatia was not subjected to any oppression on the part of the majority of the population. It is clearly documented that the violence between Serbs and Croats in April-May 1991 was unleashed by Serbian "Chetniks" (irregular forces) infil-

trated from Serbia. (See A. Bebler, *Der Krieg in Jugoslawien 1991-92*, OeMZ, 5/92.) Any contradictory assertions are simply untrue. Pro-Serbian propaganda has cleverly understood how to “insert” the atrocities and war crimes of World War II—which, by the way, were many-sided—into the *present* situation. Thus people try to conceal the Serbian bestialities and war crimes. If these are not disavowed, the Serbian side insists that they are “outweighed” relative to war crimes which take place supposedly “as always in wars, on both sides.”

The visitor to Croatia quickly comprehends the enormous disappointment which dominates among Croats concerning the stance of western Europe and the United States. Many Croats feel themselves indeed to be “betrayed and sold out.” They feel that western-central Europe, to which they belong culturally and economically beyond any doubt, has politically locked them out. They experience the European equation of the victims and the aggressors as an unbearable hypocrisy. At the same time, an astounding strategic understanding about the geopolitical coherency of things is present, even among “simple people.” People say outright that the Anglo-American powers and the former Soviet Union-Russia want to keep Europe from growing together, and that these two powers’ fostering of Serbian hegemony in the Balkans is intended to keep the Balkans out of Europe.

U.N. assures Croatian occupation

The Serbian-Croatian Line of Demarcation is heavily mined in the open fields. But often the Line of Demarcation cuts crossways right through devastated villages or cities. The Serbian and Croatian forces partly confront each other directly, within visual distance; partly they are divided by U.N. control posts, but even in these cases, mostly within sight. In most areas along the Line of Demarcation, the U.N. has erected “demilitarized” zones; besides the Unprofor peacekeeping troops, only police with handguns are allowed. As a rule, the Unprofor posts directly on the Line of Demarcation are *emptied* before the onset of darkness. At night, all along the Line of Demarcation on both sides, more and more clashes with casualties are taking place. It is, however, difficult to learn more about this guerrilla warfare.

The role of the Unprofor troops in Croatia is more than questionable. It must be clearly stated that the Croatian people, on easily comprehensible grounds, have adopted an extremely negative attitude toward the U.N. troop presence. In the course of the late autumn of 1991, the Croatian resistance against the Serbian advance was stiffening rapidly. In contrast to the summer, the Croatian fighting forces were now disposed of sufficient infantry weapons and at least a modest stock of anti-tank weapons, whereby the striking power of the tank offensive potential of the Serbians was clearly being rapidly reduced. By the end of 1991, the Serbian troops had practically halted their tank offensive, because the casualties had become too great. In November-December 1991, the

Serbian units were pushed back by the Croatian counteroffensive in the direction of their starting positions. With the Vance/Carrington truce, which took effect in January 1992, the Serbian conquests in Croatia were, so to speak, frozen at a critical point in time for the Serbians.

Thus, the Unprofor troops secure and guarantee *de facto* the Serbian occupation of Croatian territory. Since the Serbians at the moment seem to be satisfied with this arrangement to hold on to the status quo of conquest and occupation in Croatia, it necessarily follows that they “get along fine” with the U.N. backup of this occupation. On the other hand, understandably, the U.N. troops are seen by many Croats as occupation troops in disguise, who *de facto* collaborate with the Serbian occupiers and hinder the return of Croats expelled from their homes.

From Croatia to Bosnia

That this view of Unprofor is by no means merely the subjective embitterment of the Croatian side, is shown by the fact that the Serbians used the presence of Unprofor in Croatia to support their offensive against Bosnia-Herzegovina! As soon as Unprofor had moved into positions along the Serbo-Croatian Line of Demarcation, a major regroupment of the Serbian fighting forces took place. In Croatia there remained only relatively few and lightly armed security forces, while the mass of tank units and artillery were shifted out of the occupied regions of Croatia and into Bosnia. By April 1992 the regroupment had been concluded and the offensive war on Bosnia began. The Serbian advance against Bosnia was therefore also, *de facto*, covered by the United Nations. And Croatia had to stand by and watch without doing anything, while Unprofor protected the Serbian aggression.

The military situation in Bosnia

The Schiller Institute’s visiting group had the opportunity to speak with Croats and Bosnians who know the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina very precisely in its political and military aspects. The Serbians deployed the battle tactics already known from Croatia against the militarily almost totally unprepared Bosnians. Since in Bosnia, to the present day, even handguns are lacking, Serbian tank units were able to deploy very long, and very effectively. At present this is getting harder for the Serbians, because on the Bosnian side there is an improved deployment of anti-tank weaponry. Serbian fighter aircraft were and are being extensively deployed, and therefore the use of napalm is especially feared. To be sure, the Serbian Air Force flies higher and higher to try to evade the shoulder-held anti-aircraft guns.

The main weapon of the Serbian units both in Croatia and in Bosnia is the artillery. Serbian military superiority in both battle theaters rests on the great mass of mortars, artillery pieces, self-propelled cannons, the much-feared multi-barreled rocket launchers, and tanks used statically as artillery. The enormous munitions stocks of the former “Yugoslavian



Devastated houses in Lipik (90 kilometers from Zagreb), which have been subjected to the “scorched earth” policy of the Serbians—the destruction has no military purpose. Inset: Gen. Paul Albert Scherer, an adviser on security questions to the Schiller Institute who recently toured the war ravaged areas.

People’s Army” provide regular munitions supply lines. In the Croatian and Bosnian fighting forces—as in the civilian population—the greatest casualties, some 70%, during the fighting, are to be ascribed to the effectiveness of the Serbian artillery. The decisive military disadvantage of Croatia and Bosnia is the striking lack of all categories of artillery. The battle morale of the Serbian units seems quite essentially to be stamped with their trust in their own artillery monopoly. Already the deployment of grenade launchers by Croats and Bosnians seems to have rapidly been able to make the Serbian fighting morale waver.

The attention of world public opinion in relation to the war in Bosnia is largely concentrated on Sarajevo. The brutal Serbian siege of the city, with its enormous civilian casualties, fully deserves the attention and help of the world. Yet at the same time, there is a danger of reducing the overall problem of the war in Bosnia to the problem of humanitarian aid measures for Sarajevo. The grandstand visit of French President François Mitterrand to Sarajevo was precisely understood by many Bosnians and Croats in that way. While the world gaped at Sarajevo, the Serbians conquered 70% of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and killed in the process at least 150,000 people!

There is now only one single supply route to Bosnia that is not controlled by the Serbs, and that one route can hardly suffice for military supplies. It leads from the region around Sibenik on the Adriatic coast through the roughest mountain terrain into northern central Bosnia. In this part of Bosnia, the offensive Serbian troops are meeting the toughest military resistance. Something similar goes for the area to the south of Mostar. In north-central Bosnia, there are an estimated 500,000 Croatian and Muslim refugees. During the coming winter, these refugees will have to reckon with the worst. Their supplies have been cut off by the Serbian units. Supplies of food and protection from the cold cannot be delivered over the mountain route from Sibenik. International humani-

tarian aid in this area is scarcely available.

Despite the intensive diplomatic activities in Geneva and elsewhere far away from the war theater, Croatian and Bosnian officials do not count on an end of the fighting soon. The practical on-the-ground effect of the countless cease-fire agreements is very slight in Bosnia itself. It is expected that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina will turn more and more into an all-encompassing guerrilla war. The Muslim and Croatian Bosnians thereby hope to make the Serbian control over the part of Bosnia which Serbia occupies harder and harder, through guerrilla operations. The partisan warfare will give the Serbians no respite. The deployment of mines, grenade launchers, and anti-tank weapons, and small, mobile commando units could turn into an enormous military, political, and moral burden for the Serbian occupiers in the coming period. Through northern Bosnia—north and westward of the Tuzla-Banja Luka-Bihac line—runs the *main supply corridor* from Serbia to the Serbian-occupied regions in Croatia. Well-executed “pinprick” actions in this corridor will probably seriously call into question the Serbian military control of the corridor and the occupied regions in Croatia.

‘Nuremberg II’ against Serbian leaders

For the rapid establishment of a just and enduring peace in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is indispensable that the monstrous war crimes against humanity of the Serbian leadership *effectively* be brought before the world public. It is no longer enough for these Serbian major crimes to be bureaucratically documented and generically denounced. Those who are responsible for these crimes inside and outside Serbia must be brought to trial before an international War Crimes Tribunal. The precedent of this must be the Nuremberg Trials against the Nazi major war criminals after 1945.

With the Serbian offensive war against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, for the first time since the Second World War and the immediate postwar period, crimes of genocide

have been practiced in Europe. The acceptance of these major criminals on European soil by the western European and NATO nations heretofore means that the fundamental community of values which lies at the foundation of the alliance among these nations has been reduced to an absurdity.

General Scherer told Croatian journalists that the political future of the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance will be essentially determined by their attitude toward the war in former Yugoslavia in the next months. The further obligation of the moral and juridical minimal standards of the West are at stake. It has to do with the question of whether an offensive war with hundreds of thousands of mass murders "pays off." A "Nuremberg II" War Crimes Trial must charge the major culprits of the political and military leadership of Serbia, or rather former Yugoslavia, with the following crimes against humanity:

- planning and carrying out of an offensive war;
- planning and carrying out of genocide, or aiding genocide;
- crimes against humanity, especially mass expulsions;
- instigating or abetting countless "standard" war crimes of the Serbian units, such as killing prisoners and noncombatants, torture, and rape;
- causing material losses, which alone must amount to DM 20 billion (\$13.8 billion).

Along with the major Serbian war criminals, the leaders of international politics and diplomacy who encouraged and supported the Serbian offensive war must be brought to judgment. Leading politicians in the former Soviet Union and Russia, in Great Britain, the United States, France, and other European Community states should be indicted for *abetting* the Serbian offensive war/genocide and *failing to provide help* to the Croatian and Bosnian victims of the Serbian aggression. This must be done, if in Europe the fundamental outlines of international law are to remain in effect. The war in former Yugoslavia no longer involves merely "interests" and "sympathies." It involves the core civilizing substance of the European continent.

Distinguished jurists of international law, such as Professor Fastenrath of Cologne and Prof. Friedrich von der Heydte, have already publicly pointed out that the arms embargo decreed by the U.N. Security Council against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina represents a blatant violation of international law and of the U.N. Charter. This arms embargo against the victims of aggression means the *de facto participation* of the U.N. Security Council in the implementation of the Serbian offensive war/genocide.

General Scherer repeatedly emphasized the pressing necessity that western European and North American nations must lift the arms embargo against Croatia and Bosnia. This is the absolutely necessary first step toward overcoming the unlawful and "indecent" attitude of the West toward Croatia and Bosnia, and at the same time would constitute an effective contribution toward achieving a just peace.

Conference Report

Searching for a peaceful world order

by Kassim Ahmad

Mr. Ahmad, a Malaysian author, writes from Kuala Lumpur.

This is one of those times in history when human society is plunged into darkness and man cries to Heaven for divine succor. This time around, the darkness is universal and the cries are heard everywhere. Under these conditions, it is fitting that in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of a country that during the Cold War era was anti-communist and that during these days of *Pax Americana* has been critical of President Bush's so-called new world order, a seminar was held (Sept. 28-29) to consider "Post-Marxian Political Thought—Toward a Peaceful World Order," organized by the National Language and Literary Agency and the establishment Secretariat for Islamic Philosophy and Science. The meeting brought together some international and local political scientists and scholars, offered five papers and two fora, fully occupying the two days of the seminar, and was officially opened by the fast-rising Islamic politician, now Malaysia's minister of finance, Anwar Ibrahim.

Several Malay writers and academics insisted that the gap to be filled, the empty space on the world's political stage, however, is not just because of the demise of the Soviet bloc and Marxism. It was argued that democratic liberalism, Francis Fukuyama's supposed final socio-political paradigm of human evolution, in fact is crumbling too, as is becoming increasingly clear from the sad state of western societies and their economic systems.

But the dilemma, as was laid out in discussion, is that the non-aligned and Muslim worlds are just as weak, badly divided, and in disarray, lacking the philosophical basis to replace either Marxism or liberalism. Might the Islamic world view emerge as a significant factor in reshaping the world at this juncture? Only if Muslims once again gravitate toward the perception that real power stems from knowledge, one Muslim author opined.

Varied political persuasions

Hardly had the participants, numbering nearly 300, heard the rather disappointing and conservative keynote address by