
Interview: Zvonimir Separovic

'Mankind has a right to peace,' asserts former Croatian minister

Elke Fimmen spoke with former Croatian Foreign Minister Prof. Zvonimir Separovic at the beginning of the United Nations Human Rights Conference on June 17 in Vienna. Professor Separovic was at the meeting as a guest of the Austrian government, whose foreign minister, Dr. Alois Mock, served as president of the U.N. conference. Separovic was president of the International Victimological Society, and is a member of its international executive council as well as chairman of the Croatian section. As representative of this organization, he is accredited as the permanent representative to the United Nations.

EIR: What will be your appeal to the international society gathered here?

Separovic: The International Victimological Society is concerned with victims, their fates, and their rights. I come from a war area in which terrible things are happening. We see infinite human suffering, the victimization of the whole population and especially the civilian population. It is a war against the entire people and culture, a war that is deliberately conducted against those who are most vulnerable. I am of the conviction that war was and is the worst thing in human history. In this war [in the Balkans], men without moral convictions are impregnated with wild, unacceptable ideologies, but also otherwise decent people are becoming real criminals. Here can be seen the power of persuasion that books, the media, and the word have. Human nature has the potential for good or evil. With the spread of this aggressive war of conquest, the evil side of human beings was appealed to. In such a situation, the media have a far greater influence than otherwise. What is lacking is the cultivation of an ethical conviction, a positive way of thinking.

Today, we see the worst crisis in human history in Europe, comparable with what Pol Pot did [in Cambodia]. We must act to stop the aggression and to eliminate war as a instrument of policy, as a way of thinking and acting. We must build peace on another level. That is my most serious and important demand to the world society, the United Nations: to create peace, for the individual, for groups, peoples, and mankind. Mankind has a right to peace.

When the U.N. was created approximately 50 years ago,

with the expectation of maintaining peace, human rights were proclaimed for all: the right to life, freedom of thought. What was lacking, and this I say as a victimologist, is the right to peace and security. *Jus contra bellum*—we must raise the law against war to the level of international law, as the human right to peace. That is the most important thing; everything else is detail.

EIR: What do you say about the battles between Croats and Muslims in Bosnia?

Separovic: These battles are a sheer catastrophe for Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state and also for Croatia. They are the consequence of the geopolitics of the major powers, especially France and England. The Vance-Owen plan was a plan to destroy Bosnia-Herzegovina; it is murderous. The aggressor is and continues to be Serbia.

In this situation, in which we are still in battle, people easily take up arms, everyone feels insecure and threatened. Croats feel themselves to be the ruler of provinces that were "given" them by the Vance-Owen plan, although there was no legal foundation for that. The Muslims did not sign. Travnik and Mostar are not Croatian cities; they were typically mixed cities. The Vance-Owen plan spread uncertainty. A feeling of superiority is developing on the Croatian side, which began to rule "its" areas. There are extremists on both sides who are guilty and responsible for the victims. The policy of Mate Boban [leader of the extremist faction among Croats in Bosnia] in "Herzegovina" [the self-proclaimed state in Herzegovina] is going too far. Even the conversations he held in Graz with [Bosnian Serb leader Radovan] Karadzic were a completely wrong and dangerous step. The meeting in Geneva at which [Serbian dictator Slobodan] Milosevic and [Croatian President Franjo] Tudjman reached an agreement came as a climax—a completely wrong solution.

Croatia cannot enrich itself at the expense of Bosnia. Both, Croats and Muslims, are victims in this war of aggression. Tudjman cannot erase the memory of what the Serbs did to the Croats. Just this week, the Serbs in Biograd near Zadar killed seven people, including two children; there were more than 100 wounded. For that reason, I sent an open letter to the president of the conference, Mr.

Mock, in which I demanded that he do something to stop massacres as in Gorazde, where 60,000 people are now threatened, and in Biograd. We need actions, not words. This mammoth conference is full of words that produce nothing.

EIR: What do you say about the attacks on Croatia?

Separovic: You can't just attack Croatia, as, for example, Tilman Zuelch [of the Society for Endangered Peoples], formerly a friend of Croatians, did at a meeting in which I was with him on the podium. To attack Tudjman as a dictator is one thing, but to go against Croatia as a nation is going too far. I have apologized for Croatian transgressions. The president of the Croatian parliament, Stipe Mesic, has also publicly spoken out against Boban. There is strong opposition to Tudjman, as shown by, for example, the so-called Democratic Initiative. There are some dozen intellectuals abroad including, among others, Professor Banac at Yale University, who have turned against Tudjman's policy in Bosnia and predicted catastrophe. I have appeared many times with Bosnians, and have expressed my solidarity with and my understanding for the position of Muslim victims. We need a common basis for cooperation, for the solution of problems.

Serbia wants a Greater Serbia; Croatia should not want to become a Greater Croatia. We need a neighbor state, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Otherwise, the Serbian boundary will be quite close to Zagreb. Tudjman is naive when he now bargains with Milosevic and thinks that the territorial conflict between Serbia and Croatia will then be easier to solve. Serbia is behaving in a byzantine fashion in this war. Those who deal with Milosevic under the table are in danger of betraying the interests of their own people. Even if they should be doing that with good intentions, history shows that the way to hell is paved with good intentions.

EIR: What is the role of the U.N. in this war?

Separovic: The West has completely failed. Clinton promised something and did practically nothing. Europe and Russia were supposed to solve problems, but Europe is not ready to become engaged. That helped Milosevic; there is little that Serbia has not yet gained—one-third of Croatia and two-thirds of Bosnia-Herzegovina are occupied.

The role of the U.N. in the war in the Balkans is in no way positive or efficient. It is quite obviously lacking in determination. Behind the U.N. decision are different hidden interests. In first place in this regard are to be mentioned the interests of France and England, which have their own geopolitical interests in Europe, but especially since the reunification of Germany. For them, the Balkans and the former Yugoslavia are the touchstone for relations to Germany. The Balkans are, just as earlier, a French-British zone of interest. We are seeing a revival of the Entente Cordiale. Both had done everything in the war in the former Yugoslavia to maintain Yugoslavia, and they still believe themselves to

be able to reestablish Yugoslavia in some form or other. They believe themselves still able to arrive at an overall Yugoslavian solution, this time with Slovenia. The Serbians will leave Slovenia in Europe. What then remains for them is Macedonia, Sandjak, Kosova, a weak Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a bankrupt Croatia. Serbia will never forget what their friends from the West have made possible.

EIR: You spoke of the necessity of moral change. American statesman Lyndon LaRouche also put the necessity of a cultural Renaissance at the center of a speech prepared for a recent conference in Bonn.

Separovic: Mr. LaRouche did not expound that merely at the conference in Bonn. His written predictions of current developments have become very current for all thinking human beings. He is present in our thoughts. As a victimologist, I would like very much to help in his case. I was deeply impressed when I was informed of the background of his case. I believe that he is an innocent victim of political decisions and that he must be released immediately. To this end, we have written an important resolution for his release and hope the new President in the United States is more open in this case.

I also hope for change with regard to the death penalty. This must still be endured by two-thirds of the world's population, including in the United States and in China, India, and Pakistan. We must change that. I am a convinced opponent of the death penalty. At the conference in Vienna, an appeal of more than 120 prominent individuals, including Nobel Prize holders and leading cultural figures, with more than 10,000 signatures, was given to the general secretary of the conference, Ibrahim Falle. In that, we demanded abolition of the death penalty before the end of this century.

I am against the death penalty even though this perhaps appears to be a paradox for someone who comes from a country in which war is prevalent. I cannot accept the death penalty as a means of punishment. Recently, capital penalties were imposed in Sarajevo against Serbian soldiers who had committed crimes. At first, this seems logical, but it helps nothing. The state and the judiciary are giving a bad example through that. The state has the task of defending and protecting life. For that reason, I am opposed to the possible reintroduction of the death penalty in Croatia. We need an international war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, but not the death penalty. The principle of the sanctity of life must be respected by the state and society.

I would like at this point to refer to the fact that there are still more than 10 Croatian freedom fighters in American prisons who, in the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, took action for a free Croatia. Unfortunately, they used illicit means such as airplane hijacking and violence. They were sentenced justly, but it would also now be time to reconsider all these cases. The Croatian Society for Victimology is working for the release of all these people.