

Croatian and Muslim relief organizations also continue to act jointly. I.e., among the population there is no hysteria against the Muslims. Humanitarian organizations report that the Bosnian refugees in Croatia, be they of Croat or Muslim heritage, continue to be treated well, even under the reduced economic circumstances. Representatives of the Bosnian government continue to work in the Croatian capital city Zagreb, though under increasingly difficult conditions.

So all is not yet lost. But the internal dynamic of the war in Bosnia set into motion by the Vance-Owen "peace" plan will be difficult to stop, unless the West establishes a completely different set of international ground-rules.

Isolated internationally

On top of this, the country is becoming increasingly isolated internationally, which hits especially hard in the economic sector. The bitter irony of the situation is that precisely because it agreed to the Vance-Owen plan, thereby acknowledging the western and Russian position of assigning Serbia the role of "regional policeman" in the Balkans, Croatia now finds itself in a trap. For, now it is an easy matter to attack and isolate the country because of its "complicity" in the same aggression that has victimized Croatia itself.

There remains some hope that the government will be able to quickly extricate itself from this psychological spider's web spun by the geopolitical string-pullers in London, and will not grasp at pragmatic "advantages" which do not in fact exist—not for the political establishment, and certainly not for the Croatian people.

The Croatian people already possess the moral basis for a constructive policy. It is amazing to see that despite their difficult circumstances, the people we met radiated a sense of inner peace, dignity, and humor—qualities which one finds much less frequently in my home country Germany. Unlike in the largely "de-Christianized" western European countries, the Croats are inspired by deep-seated Christian faith, which is expressed in a special warmth and readiness to share what little they still have.

As a result of this visit, it became much clearer why the destruction of Croatia, along with its huge cultural, political, and economic potential, is high on the geopolitical strategists' agenda. In addition to its rich, 1,000-year-old cultural tradition, historically this country has always been a special bridgehead in defense of the Christian image of man, and continues even today to perform that service. It is no accident that the loudest public criticism of Croatia's policy toward Bosnia has come from the Catholic Church, particularly from Cardinal Kuharic in Zagreb. And just as Bosnia is to be destroyed as a paradigm of a multicultural state and a community of religions, so in Croatia the moral, cultural, and closely related economic motor for peaceful reconstruction in the Balkans will hang in the balance. It is therefore in everyone's interest that the West help Croatia to play a constructive role in putting an end to the conflict.

Interview: Paul Hebert

Haiti must determine its own destiny

The embargo imposed by the international community on Haiti, although under cover of defending democracy, has placed an entire people at risk. Paul Hebert, delegate at large of the National Campaign for Unity, Peace, and Reconciliation, granted Nouvelle Solidarité the following interview while in Paris, where he put out an appeal to the French. The Campaign for Reconciliation was born from the idea that the interest of the Haitian people, above parties, lies in uniting and being able to deliberate in a sovereign manner the direction of their future, without international interference, with a national priority being to end the embargo.

In early February, a Clinton administration official said that the United States was now pushing for a tightening of sanctions. Working with Canada, France, and Venezuela, the United States will urge the U.N. to make mandatory a ban on all nonscheduled commercial flights, which would presumably hit the wealthy and military the hardest. The New York Times wrote that the decision came "after a wave of reports about a surge of malnutrition to the most destitute parts of Haiti. Nonetheless the United States continues to claim that Haiti was already poor, making it "unfair" to blame the new, horrifying reports on the sanctions.

Q: The oil embargo has just been reimposed on Haiti. What are the effects?

Hebert: The Haitian people think it their duty to reiterate their concern over the rapid rate of degradation in the national economy and state of health in the country, as a result of the unjust and criminal sanctions imposed by the OAS, U.N., France, the United States, Canada, and Venezuela.

Therefore, Haitians see the reimposition of the oil embargo as a grand deception against Haiti. The shortages which have already been felt are leaving in their wake the complete ruin of an economy which has already been strangled, as well as social dislocations, affecting above all the most deprived strata of the population.

Q: How has the economy been affected?

Hebert: First of all, transportation of foodstuffs, irrigation networks, public transportation have been paralyzed, and numerous commercial and industrial enterprises have been closed, which is going to give rise to a return of unemployment, hunger, and poverty in the cities, especially the

poorest.

The extraction industry, our principal source of foreign exchange, will definitively be liquidated and the recovery of lost market share will be very difficult in the future. Further, the export of traditional products, another important source of foreign exchange and work for more than 300,000 families (1 family=10 people), is immediately threatened with the loss of whatever market share still remains. The financial integrity of the banking system will similarly be put in danger.

The functioning of essential services—electricity (3 hours of electricity out of every 24 or 48 hours, and not all neighborhoods are supplied at the same time), telephone, drinking water, ports, airports, postal service, the cold chain (which preserves vaccines), all are severely compromised. The same fate awaits emergency services—hospitals and firetrucks—and security services dedicated to protection of life and property. Since there is no kerosene, lighting for the majority of households has stopped.

Q: Is humanitarian aid able to fulfill essential needs?

Hebert: Currently, it's no longer possible to receive the humanitarian flights (four each week) which contribute what little they can to relieve the suffering imposed on the population.

It's worth noting on the ecological plane that there is growing destruction of the environment and agricultural resources caused by the intensification of tree-cutting in order to produce charcoal in the absence of propane gas. The health situation is a catastrophe. According to an inquest carried out by the World Health Organization and Unicef, the embargo has caused over 20,000 deaths, especially among children between 0 and 5 and among the elderly.

According to a study by researchers at Harvard University, 1,000 Haitian children from 0 to 6 years old are dying each month as a result of the sanctions imposed on the Haitian people by the international community. In the period outside the embargo, 3,000 children die every month. According to the American researchers, the embargo, rather than resolving the political crisis, has only increased the suffering among society's most vulnerable strata, destroying the middle class, multiplying tenfold the riches of the wealthy class.

The promotion of democracy should not and cannot be at the price of a widespread economic and social devastation. The Haitian people would like to think that the French people share this opinion.

Q: The United Nations appears to have started off with good intentions—

Hebert: The manner in which the United Nations seeks to impose democracy—which in itself is a good thing, like civilization—on us, is not at all good, given that everything should be done by stages.

Democracy should not be an excuse for men who call

themselves humanists to engage in wrongdoing and injustice. From the beginning there was a coup whose justification was not allowed to be explained before it caused a precipitous, partisan and self-interested reaction by the OAS, instigated by Venezuela and France. All of this was due to a poor understanding of Haiti's problems, of the psychology of the situation, of the people, and even of the Haitian individual. Thus, through a fatality peculiar to this country, a head of state, because of his indescribable conduct, was thrown out of power, was able to find support which is incomprehensible, overturning every foundation of an entire country and the lives of an entire people. If the principle defended by the international community is good and should make inroads into Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was handed power on a silver platter, showed he was not the leader through whom democracy was going to flourish in this country.

The international community must begin to analyze the facts in order to render a more adequate justice, when it declares that democracy's ultimate aim is justice. One doesn't achieve justice via such glaring injustice that, over two years, has ruined a whole country. That is a crime for which the very self-professed humanists, be they François Mitterrand, Alain Juppé, Carlos Andrés Pérez, or Brian Mulroney, to name just those, will not go uncondemned. Where are Carlos Andrés Pérez, George Bush, and Brian Mulroney now? What has the government of President Mitterrand become? . . .

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