

# Croatia takes stock of a century of war and British geopolitics

by Elke Fimmen

**Editor's note:** *The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party of the late President Franjo Tudjman was defeated in parliamentary elections on Jan. 3, bringing to power the center-left opposition coalition of the Social Democrats (headed by former Communist Party leader Ivica Racan) and the Social Liberals. The two parties, according to projections by Croatia's state television, are expected to hold some 70 seats in the 152-seat Parliament, requiring the support of four other opposition parties (24 seats) to achieve a majority. The HDZ is expected to have 48 seats. Racan, the new Prime Minister, is reputed to be "pro-Western," and the vote was welcomed by the Clinton administration and the European Union. Racan is promising 17% state budget cuts, reduction of taxes, and efforts to reduce unemployment, which is over 20%. Presidential elections are scheduled for Jan. 24. The following report was filed from Zagreb before the parliamentary elections.*

On Dec. 14, 1999, the Croatian translation of William Engdahl's book *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order*, was presented in Zagreb to about 100 guests by the publishing house AGM. Engdahl is the Economics Intelligence Co-Director of *EIR*. The book was published in 1992 in German and one year later in English (the English translation is available from Ben Franklin Booksellers, Inc., 1 (800) 453-4108). AGM, which is named after the famous Croatian writer Antun Gustav Matos, is owned by the city of Zagreb; it decided last autumn to publish the book in its series on contemporary history, and invited the author for this occasion.

After an introduction by the director of AGM, Boze Covic, the book was presented by historian Antun Abramovic and Zeljko Kruselj, writer and commentator for the Croatian daily *Vecernji List*. Mirjana Rakic, head of Foreign News Department of Croatian TV, moderated the event. The author presented an update, "Ten Years After," in which he explained how German reunification and peaceful economic development after the fall of communism were sabotaged by British geopolitical maneuvers, including the destabilization of Europe during the war of Greater Serbian aggression, starting in 1991, against first Slovenia and Croatia, and then Bosnia-Herzegovina. Engdahl stressed that it was American

statesman Lyndon LaRouche, who had, despite all odds, fought for a just new world economic order against geopolitical balance-of-power schemes.

That evening, the main TV magazine broadcast its interview with Engdahl and invited the viewers to read the book, because it represented "another perspective on the century and its underlying geopolitics." *Vecernji List* published a review by Kruselj the following Sunday.

## Turbulent times

The book presentation took place at a turbulent time for Croatia. The day before, President Franjo Tudjman had been laid to rest in a state funeral. Despite many criticisms of his policies, the majority of the Croatian population highly valued the fact that, under his Presidency, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation were achieved under most difficult international circumstances. Croatians expressed their sentiment with a strong turnout for the funeral ceremonies.

That this is also a time of reflection on the dramatic events since 1990, when the country embarked on its course toward independence, became obvious in the approach of the presenters of Engdahl's book. Abramovic recounted how he, as an officer in the Croatian army, was impressed by the book, which he read in 1994. In 1995, through military operations "Flash" and "Storm," which contributed to the victory over Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croatian territory of Krajina was liberated from its occupation by Greater Serbian forces. Only in 1998, was Eastern Slavonia also finally peacefully reintegrated into Croatia.

"At the time I read this book, I was an active participant in the war of defense and national and social liberation of Croatia. William Engdahl's book came as a sort of enlightenment to me as a human being and as a historian," Abramovic recounted. "At that time, this book was part of my motivation to endure all hardships of war, simply because it showed me who the real enemy was. To me, the real enemy was not the soldier on the opposite side of the front, but the secret group that had pushed him to fulfill that group's selfish interests and goals — the goals of absolute power. That revelation unveiled the background of the entire situation — the war against Croatia had not been engineered in Belgrade, but in London and

Washington. The tragic thing was that at that time, there was no way out—Croatia was to exist or to perish.”

Abramovic said that the war is far from finished, because the oligarchical forces behind the war are continuing the battle in the economic and even spiritual spheres, under the pretense of protecting democratic principles, human rights, and so on. He concluded that the only way to resist is by inner spiritual strength and self-confidence, by ethics and morality, which have to result in true leadership. This means working for creativity, inventiveness, and well-organized economy, based on faith in God and an equal faith in the individual and the people. This, he concluded, is the task of the 21st century, which, according to philosopher N.A. Berdyayev, will be “a century of spirit or a century without existence.”

### **British geopolitics**

Kruselj focussed on the geopolitics of the British establishment at the beginning of this century. It was “alarmed by the realization that Germany, as the leading continental power, intended to build a rail line from Berlin to Baghdad, a project which might enable Germany to establish control over the Near and Middle East, where the largest oil deposits were found,” he said. For that reason, British intelligence agents endeavored to isolate Germany and block the completion of the project. Their plan included a special role for Serbia, which was written down by R.G.D. Laffan: “A glance at the map of the world will show how the chain of states stretched from Berlin to Baghdad. The German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria, Turkey. One little strip of territory blocked the way and prevented the two ends of the chain from being linked together. That little strip was Serbia. . . . Serbia was really the first line of defense of our eastern possessions. If she were crushed or enticed into the ‘Berlin-Baghdad’ system, then our vast but slightly defended empire would soon have felt the shock of Germany’s eastward thrust.”

Kruselj underlined in his presentation the role in the 1930s of Bank of England Governor Montagu Norman, who had personally authorized credits to Hitler. He also mentioned the role of Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Cyrus Vance in engineering the “oil crises” of 1973 and 1979. Kruselj ended by citing Engdahl’s warnings of a victory of the “Bush dynasty” in the upcoming U.S. Presidential elections, and its fatal consequences for the future of countries in transition.

### **A new imperialism?**

It is crucial that American and European policy in the Balkans take into account the Croatian view of recent history. People from different political currents and opinions wish to determine their own future. Further interference into Croatian internal politics—as had occurred during the recent period, through public support for the opposition parties by the United States and European Union—might backfire, and be seen as a new kind of imperialistic attitude. The absence of U.S. and

western European statesmen at President Tudjman’s funeral, which was explained as a protest against Tudjman’s “undemocratic” behavior and “Greater Croatian policies” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, left a lot of bad feelings in the country. Even for those who did not like the late President’s policies, this behavior was considered an insult to the newly formed nation, which was established under the most difficult of circumstances.

Opposition leaders who wish to replace the governing HDZ party, cannot allow themselves to betray the achievements of Croatia as a sovereign state. A horrible war had to be fought for the establishment of the nation, which now needs economic development above all else. Officially, Croatia has 20% unemployment, many factories have been closed in the process of privatization, banks went bankrupt, and agriculture is in very bad shape. Almost no significant outside help was received for the huge war reconstruction needs. The country has been under constant pressure to liberalize and open its economy, which led to economic disasters and encouraged criminal elements, who grabbed their share in the process of “privatization.” Investigations have been started into some of these deals, and the opposition is demanding a thorough investigation. Some government officials have started to question those extreme neo-liberal policies, which were forced on the country by international financial institutions such as the World Bank, and to focus instead on creation of jobs. Some big infrastructure projects have recently been implemented, in the areas of roads and energy.

Thus, the country is in a very delicate situation. Should the opposition parties succeed in replacing the HDZ-led government, which has ruled the country since 1990, the test of reality will have to be passed by their vocal supporters in the West. Many promises have been made for better economic and political conditions, including entry into the European Union and NATO, once Croatia establishes “democracy.” So far, however, the disastrous policies of the International Monetary Fund (which were imposed on the whole region), the effects of the NATO war against Yugoslavia, and the lack of economic reconstruction under the umbrella of the “Stability Pact,” have been the trademark of those who are loudly calling for democratic changes. Opposite to its claims, this kind of policy is directly facilitating social chaos, destabilization, and the threat of new dictatorships and wars.

Croatians are not politically naive, and they understand very well that the policies of the United States are determining their future. Therefore, the interest in the Presidential campaign of Lyndon LaRouche has been growing tremendously, as could be seen from the many discussions surrounding the presentation of Engdahl’s book. LaRouche represents a programmatic reference point for those patriotic forces in all currents in Croatia, who want to finally escape the vicious circle of the geopolitical “century of war,” and instead find their place in a community of prosperous and sovereign nations.