
Interview: Franjo Golem

Why Croatia wants national independence

Mr. Golem is the new official representative of the Republic of Croatia in the United States and Canada, and has just registered his office in Washington with the Justice Department. It is not yet an embassy, he explains, but "an office for trade, culture, information, and so on. Like Quebec, which has offices all over the world."

Before his appointment to his current post, Mr. Golem was foreign minister of Croatia, and he is still a cabinet minister. He left Zagreb for the United States in order to take over one of the most delicate positions in the leadership of his country at the present time. But, he insists, "my occupation is specialist in abdominal surgery."

He was interviewed by Umberto Pascali on July 9.

Golem: I want to tell you an historical truth. In 1776, after the Declaration of Independence of the United States, only three or four states recognized the new independent republic immediately. Among them was Croatia, at that time known as the Republic of Dubrovnik. This means that 215 years ago Croatia recognized U.S. independence. Isn't now the time to return that gift and to recognize Croatia? I think President Bush doesn't know that. But ask any historian, they will tell you. It is very important to have a sense of the meaning of history.

EIR: You say that the U.S. does not want to recognize this historical debt toward Croatia?

Golem: It is a question of understanding history. Some people in the United States believe, because it is easier to believe it, that what is going on in my country is just some violence between ethnic groups, because of race or territorial reasons. It is really simple to think like this. So up to one year ago, in the U.S. everybody was thinking in terms of a unified Yugoslavia, but then there were all the changes in eastern Europe.

Now, if you think historically, you see that those changes took place mostly on the western side of the line that goes from the Baltic to the Adriatic coast. It is not an ethnic issue, but a cultural one. On the western side, there are the republics that are mostly Roman Catholic and western-oriented by culture, by the arts, and by way of life. On the eastern side there

is the Orthodox religion, a different culture that came from Byzantium. You will see on the western side Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland, Hungary, the former East Germany, the Czech and Slovakian Federation, Slovenia, and Croatia. And on the eastern side, you have Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and so on. Again if you think historically, you will find on the western side a tradition of democracy, free common market, human and civil rights, freedom. On the eastern side you will see a marxist-like totalitarian ideology, with abuse of human rights, a socialistic economy, and lots of trials and prisoners.

In Croatia, we have already closed three prisons since the fall of the communist regime. We intend not to have a single political prisoner. In Croatia and Slovenia, we received our religion in the seventh and eighth centuries, which means we have been Catholic for 13 or 14 centuries, and this religion tells us that it is love that is most important in your life. On the eastern side, unfortunately, is different.

EIR: How did the Croatians and Slovenians receive the position of Secretary James Baker, who spoke in Belgrade as representative of the United States?

Golem: You can see how from an oversimplistic conception of history, you can arrive at the point that people accept a certain policy. In the U.S. now, everything is simple. They tell them that Serbians and Croatians are fighting for some piece of land, but it's deeper and to understand it you have to study books and to think hard.

You see the terrible irony: The U.S., with the free western countries, has been trying to fight Marxism for 70 or 80 years, and now they are helping the federal central government of Belgrade! This means they are exactly helping and encouraging the communist regime of Serbia.

You saw what happened after Mr. Baker issued his statement in support of a unified Yugoslavia. He was encouraging the federal Army, and the Army started to fight against democracy, because the communist hardliners in Yugoslavia are in the Army. They have a new party, they call it the New Communist Party. Every officer is pressured to join.

EIR: How do you see the process toward independence?

Golem: At this point, we hope to be an independent country. We had a referendum, and on the basis of the Constitution, our Parliament declared the independence of the Croatian Republic. It was the will of the people. But immediately after that, the violence started, caused by the federal Army. So we had to declare a three-month moratorium. That means we are not going to take any step further toward our independence, but we cannot stop independence, because that belongs to the Croatian people, not to the President or the government. Only the Croatian Parliament can change that declaration, and we have to follow it. We tried again and again to reach an agreement and to negotiate with other republics and to preserve Yugoslavia as a union of equal sovereign republics,

but we couldn't make it.

EIR: What do you think is going to happen?

Golem: It will get worse and worse. I think the duty of the free world, which knows what democracy is, is to solve that problem *now*, not after we lose hundreds and hundreds of young lives. We would like to have everyone alive. We don't like to have dead people.

EIR: You have seen the campaign launched against Germany and Austria using the slogan of the "Fourth Reich"?

Golem: Yes, they are trying to stop any European country that is going to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. I don't think it is really important. I don't think it will change much. What is important is that Germany or Austria or Great Britain or France are going to recognize the independence of these two republics.

We did have big problems during the spring, and no statement of support came from Bonn, because Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher is a left liberal and a good friend of the foreign minister of Yugoslavia, Budimir Loncar. But then Chancellor Kohl said, if the German people have the right to unify themselves, we cannot say anything against the independence of the people of Croatia or Slovenia or even Serbia; I think that is justice. Then, Genscher had to change. The point is: It doesn't matter if it is 250 million Americans or 3.5 million Albanians or 5 million Croats, independence and freedom belong to every nation, and we have six states in Europe smaller than Croatia by population and territory—Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Albania, and Luxembourg—but still they are doing very well.

The Croatian economy is very strong. First of all, we have tourism. Millions and millions of tourists come to our Adriatic coast every summer. The second most important sector is shipbuilding. Croatia is in the third or fourth place in the world for shipbuilding. We build ships for the Soviet Union, Sweden, Japan, Korea, China, Monrovia, South America—especially big tanker ships, and we are really good at that. We have really good agriculture. We can produce as much food as we need and sell three times as much to Europe—we produce four times what we ourselves need. We export 55% of all meat consumed in Italy. And we are not worried about our future or economy. The Croatian people are very well-educated people.

We have now in the diaspora more than 55,000 Croats graduated from universities. In Canada there are 1,000 Croats who graduated in Zagreb, a 350-year-old university in a 900-year-old city.

EIR: How can your diplomatic activity change the situation in the United States?

Golem: We ask and we pray for everyone in the world to understand our situation, our position. It is time to change

the policy for those small states of Croatia and Slovenia. Furthermore, the 1992 integration of Europe is coming soon, and we will join Europe. We belong to Europe and we will be in Europe by any means.

Even if the U.S. or anybody else doesn't want to recognize Croatia, we will still try to get our independence, because we don't want to risk going back to a communist system in Croatia. We know what that means.

EIR: What do you think about the proposal for a European development Triangle?

Golem: It is the right idea, because, for example, the Soviet Union has really been destroyed economically. If Europe is economically strong, then Europe will help the Soviet Union—export goods, make loans, and everything else.

EIR: Can this also save Serbia?

Golem: I will tell you one thing: They will like to fight. Serbian President [Slobodan] Milosevic said once that Serbians do not know how to work, but they know how to fight. Then, he said, let's fight.

We ask God and the free world: Give us 10 years to work in peace. We shall show everyone how industrious we are.

Interview: Josip Svtan

'Baker is to blame for Croatian crisis'

Mr. Svtan is the vice president of the Croatian Democratic Party, the second largest party of Croatia. A civil engineer, he returned recently from Germany, where he was politically close to the Christian Democratic Union of Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Two men in uniform are constantly on patrol in front of his home in Zagreb. Like many other Croats and Croatian-Americans, he is aware of the bitter irony of being forced to attack the leaders of the United States, the country that has been seen as the land of freedom, fighting against the communist dictatorships.

He was interviewed by Umberto Pascali on July 8 by telephone from Zagreb. Pascali asked for his comment on the observation of Lyndon LaRouche of June 27, that had it not been for the "ham-handed and foolish meddling" of U.S.