

new targets include the Dalmatian coast and particularly the key ports and industrial cities of Zadar and Split, which have been the targets of several air attacks. All the important towns of the province of Slavonia, in the eastern part of Croatia, have been under attack by highly sophisticated weapons systems, which the Croatian militia, armed with light weapons, cannot resist for any length of time.

There is also heavy fighting on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is claimed by the Greater Serbians. It is clear that the war will extend itself into the territories of other republics, like Macedonia, and other nations, such as Hungary, if it is not stopped. The Hungarian authorities have denounced the violation of their space by Yugoslavian military planes involved in attacks against Croatian towns. Budapest has ordered its Armed Forces to fire against any military intrusion. The fear of massacres of civilians has already provoked a mass exodus of about 200,000 people, many from the Hungarian minority, over the Hungarian borders.

The government of Croatia has given the federal army until Aug. 31 to return to the barracks, otherwise there will be a general mobilization of the civilian population. All of society will have to be militarized, industry will be reorganized as in a situation of general war, and every civilian will have a role to play, particularly in the logistical and medical sectors, according to Croatian sources.

Diplomacy to no avail

On Aug. 27, the leadership of the federal army and of Croatia had their last negotiating session on the island of Brioni, which produced no results except an intensification of the fighting. A few hours before, the European Community foreign ministers in Brussels issued a demand for a ceasefire until Sept. 1, to allow for organizing a conference with all the republics to decide upon political and juridical initiatives to guarantee existing borders and to take action against those who want to continue the war. If Belgrade refuses, the EC is threatening to take a more pro-Croatian position, and some individual members of the EC are even threatening to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia if Belgrade boycotts the mediation effort. France and Germany have proposed the formation of a commission of five European experts to work out a negotiated solution over two months' time.

It seems that Europe has not learned the lessons of the past months and is continuing with the same mistakes. This is not the time for more ultimatums, but for political and economic intervention in recognizing the independence of Croatia and Slovenia and telling "Greater Serbia" to stop all military aggression immediately or pay for it with political and economic isolation. Europe had already abdicated its role earlier in the summer, when it did not dare to challenge and reject the Bush-Baker green light for the creation of "Greater Serbia" at the beginning of the crisis. The time for empty words is long past.

Interview: Massimo Pini

West bears guilt in Iraq embargo

Massimo Pini is a member of the Swiss Federal Parliament and an officer of the Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. After making known in the strongest terms his opposition to the Gulf war, he has spent the last months agitating to have the blockade against Iraq lifted. A few weeks ago, he joined the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq.

EIR: Do you think Iraq was set up for a fall in the Gulf?

Pini: On the basis of my own personal knowledge, the Gulf war had been planned and was a declared intent as early as the last years of the Reagan administration. I do not know whether the Iraqi President fell into a trap. Nonetheless, I do confirm the information I just referred to above, which was released at Brussels on Jan. 16, 1991.

EIR: What steps have you been taking since the war "ended"?

Pini: During the June parliamentary session, I sent up a resolution to the attention of the Swiss federal government, demanding that the Swiss lift the embargo against Iraq to restore aid shipments to the civilian population. My proposal, therefore, deals only with liberalizing economic-civilian exchange, humanitarian aid, and rebuilding day-to-day life in Iraq. I consider it urgent that these exchanges be liberalized, taking into consideration first and foremost the pressing humanitarian needs, in order to spare both the Iraqis and other peoples hit by the war, still greater suffering.

EIR: One can't help feeling that Switzerland is no longer as neutral as it claims to be.

Pini: I had the occasion to express myself in this respect, as a federal parliamentarian in Bern, and as President of Social Questions in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at Strasbourg. There have been Swiss initiatives taken to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict. Nonetheless, the Swiss federal government, backed by the majority of the governing parties and the parties in the Federal Parliament, upheld the U.N. decision dealing with the embargo and the sanctions against Iraq. I was against

armed intervention; I wanted negotiations to go on, to forestall recourse to arms, in spite of the lawless attack on Kuwait by the Iraqis. From the outset, I condemned the idea of armed intervention, just as I condemned the occupation of Kuwait by the Baghdad government's Armed Forces.

Truth to tell, the juridical and political concept of Swiss neutrality is changing against the background of the present international political configuration. Neutrality does not mean political "silence" when international law is being broken. For example, we were always opposed to apartheid, though we did not uphold the U.N. sanctions against South Africa. In the case of Iraq, we did uphold the embargo, even though my country is not a full member of the U.N.

For my part, I have always felt that that sanctions and economic embargo against a state, the government of which has broken fundamental norms of international law, at the end of the day hits hardest the least well-off sectors of the civilian population. But the latter, after all, are not those who bear the responsibility for political initiatives by governments which, on top of everything else, do not even respect the basic rules of a democracy!

EIR: What was your role in obtaining the release of westerners detained in Iraq after August 1990?

Pini: Neither the government nor the Swiss Federal Parliament decided to send a state or parliamentary mission to Baghdad to obtain the release of our citizens detained in Iraq along with other hostages from various western countries. My mission was a private one, which I carried out with three colleagues of the National Council, and which we decided upon and paid for out of our own pockets. We were five in all, the others being Messrs. Oelher, Jaeger, Ziegler, as well as Mr. Wittstein who is not a parliamentarian.

On returning to Switzerland on Nov. 22, 1990, we had succeeded in obtaining freedom for 36 hostages, including 16 Swiss, 4 Irishmen, 4 Swedes, 4 Dutchmen, 4 Germans, 2 Belgians, and 2 British subjects. We were received, however, on our return, by virulent attacks, aimed at a parliamentary mission which was carried out privately.

While in Baghdad, I and my colleagues were met with understanding and practical help both from the government and from parliamentarians, in order that we achieve our aim, namely to bring back the Swiss "hostages." The only stern criticism the Iraqi authorities made of Switzerland had to do with the rigid "Swiss embargo" which had cut off food aid (powdered baby milk) and pharmaceuticals for civilians.

The fact that we had firmly condemned the Iraqi government for its illegal occupation of Kuwait was never, during our trip to Baghdad, raised as a subject of special criticism.

The members of the government and the Parliament of Iraq with whom I met and spoke on numerous occasions, set out their own arguments justifying both the war against Iran and the occupation of Kuwait, however, without expecting that we share their views nor uphold them politically.

The western mass media have not referred to, or have not always been able to refer correctly to the character of the Gulf conflict which, in the final analysis, caused mainly civilian deaths, without changing in any fundamental way the internal political situation of Iraq. From that standpoint, the Gulf war has been an exercise in futility, carried out in the name of "freedom and law."

EIR: What do you think personally about the Iraqi government?

Pini: I am not sufficiently familiar with what the government of Iraq has done on the level of social rights for its own population. All I can say, is that during the 10 days I spent in Iraq, the people I was able to speak with had not wanted the war, but did believe in the rights referred to by their government.

My view is that the West refuses even to try to understand the Arab world, its mentality, and above all, its culture. Had there not been the "political reason of oil," there never would have been a "U.N. force" set into motion to dislodge Iraq from Kuwait.

There have been other violations of the basic norms of international law, just as serious as this one, but never before was the banner of "freedom and international law" raised to set up a military operation of this scope. Among other examples, I may cite the Turkish occupation of Cyprus, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither of which have been affected in the least by the countless resolutions adopted by the U.N. Security Council.

Under President Bush, the U.S.A. appears to have jumped on the Kuwaiti cause to preserve strategic positions in the Persian Gulf, the economic aspect of which is sufficiently obvious. The world abounds with evil dictatorships, with men who have power, but who do not respect basic human rights. If Saddam Hussein be such a one, then surely he is not alone on the international political stage.

The western world, the world of democracy and freedom, bears a heavy burden of guilt—and I mean the U.S. and Europe too—toward the Arab world, and that includes Iraq.

EIR: Are you aware of the Commission to Investigate Allied War Crimes called for by Ramsey Clark?

Pini: With reference to Mr. Ramsey Clark's initiative, I am not informed of its political and juridical content. It is incumbent upon the American people, surely, to express in due time their judgment on this terrifying war in the Gulf. But the final judgment will be that of history, made by men who are truly free and who can therefore express a definitive view.

Even today I believe that military intervention in the Gulf could have been avoided, precisely in the name of law, which should be respected and applied in the framework of international society.