

ly its political will not to accept aggression and territorial conquest by force nor the aberration of 'ethnic cleansing.' . . . Today as in the past, despite the more or less compelling documents of international law, man and his needs unfortunately continue to be threatened, to such an extent that in recent months a new concept has emerged, that of 'humanitarian intervention.' . . . Once the possibilities afforded by diplomatic negotiations and the procedures provided for by international agreements and organizations have been put into effect, and that, nevertheless, populations are succumbing to the attacks of an unjust aggressor, states no longer have a right to indifference. It seems clear that *their duty is to disarm this aggressor*, if all other means have proved ineffective.

"[Europe's] institutions are being ignored. All peace efforts of recent years have been, as it were, destroyed. . . . The whole of Europe is being humiliated. . . . Humanitarian law, a laborious achievement of this century, is no longer being respected. . . . The most elementary principles governing social life are being scoffed at by veritable hordes spreading terror and death.

"Finally, those who indulge in such actions and those who excuse or justify them, will answer for it not only before the international community, but still more before God."

John Paul II offered four principles to world leaders and to those who "have in their hands a weapon in order to attack their brothers and sisters." Three of the principles were that a war of aggression is not worthy of man, the moral and physical destruction of the enemy or stranger is a crime, and practical indifference in the face of such forms of behavior is a *culpable omission*.

The following excerpts are from a homily at the ecumenical Prayer Vigil organized by John Paul II "to pray and fast for peace in the Balkans and Europe," on Jan. 9 in Assisi.

"This is the second part of our Vigil. It is taking place, for us Christians, in the Upper Basilica of Saint Francis. The representatives of Islam have gathered in another part of this Sacro Convento as have some representatives of Judaism. . . . How can hostility continue to exist in the world? How can hatred continue to exist? . . . These are the questions which tonight we feel we must ask everyone, including ourselves, in the face of the tragedy of Bosnia-Herzegovina. . . . Are not all these disasters the reflection of that battle that opposes good and evil, which sets up a society based on selfishness and greed against the civilization of love? . . .

"Is it even possible to deprive a man of the right to life and security because he is not one of us, because he is the 'other'? To deprive a woman of the right to her integrity and dignity because she is not one of us, because she is the 'other'? And again to deprive a child of the right to a sheltering roof and the right to food because this child is on the side of the 'other'? . . . Are we not all children of one God? . . .

"How is it then that there is so much violence around us

. . . ? What have we done with the Lord's gift, with his precious inheritance? Have we preferred a peace 'as the world gives'? A peace consisting of the silence of the oppressed, the powerlessness of the vanquished, the humiliation of those individuals and peoples who see their rights trampled upon? . . . Peace on earth is our task, a task for men and women 'of good will.' . . . Each of us is called to follow that path . . . proclaiming the rights of each and all; affirming the dignity of every man and woman of whatever ethnic group, color of skin, or religious denomination; denouncing acts of violence and oppression . . . these are some of the steps which tonight, as heir of Jesus's peace, we commit ourselves to taking."

To convey the seriousness of his intention most forcefully, the pope offered himself as the leader in this commitment. Quoting the opening of the famous prayer by St. Francis, in whose city of Assisi the service occurred, he prayed, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."

Vojvodina fears a Serbian pogrom

by Tibor Kovats

Dr. Tibor Kovats is a spokesman for an interparliamentary working group, New Europe—Peace through Development, based in Budapest. He is also a leader in the Hungarian Association of Former Political Prisoners. The following article appeared in the Dec. 25, 1992 issue of the French bi-weekly Nouvelle Solidarité and has been translated from the French.

The war in former Yugoslavia which has grabbed the attention of the world for several months has already caused over 10,000 deaths and a million refugees. But it will not stop there; there are other peoples and other regions which are in a situation analogous to that in Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia, and which are at risk of sinking into oblivion, and their problems are neither less important nor less immediate.

This is what is going on in Vojvodina, a region in the north inhabited by Hungarians and Germans, and in Kosova, a region in the south, the majority of whose population is of Albanian origin. These peoples are oppressed and discriminated against, and the Serbs are making a mockery of their fundamental rights.

Let us look at the history of the problem. The region today known by the name of Vojvodina is an artificial creation: It was formed after the First World War by the violent conquest of territories (among them those populated solely by Hungarians), under the pretext of restoring to Serbia those regions

of Hungary populated by Serbs. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Serbs and others had planned to establish themselves in less-inhabited border areas, and in 1918 comprised less than a third of the total population.

Now, the ethnic repartition is very heterogeneous, comprised of 20 different nationalities, in which the Serbs make up at most 55% of the population. They mostly live in the south, along the Danube-Timis line, whereas, as one approaches the present Hungarian border, the majority of the population—despite the massive colonization of Serbs in the south—is Hungarian.

The official statistics give the Hungarian proportion of the population as 20%—which comes to 400,000 people for the region as a whole—but they are either mistaken in their counting or they are not counting the difference between the north and the south. Worse, they could easily have been falsified, given the systematic and overt intimidation that has taken place since the latest elections. It is a known fact that the Hungarians dare not let themselves be *officially* known as Hungarian.

Repression and injustice

The pressure for Serbian nationalism which is being put on the Hungarians, of course, is nothing new, but since the outbreak of war, there are fears of the spread of “official” pogroms. A brief glance at the repressive measures that have been imposed gives one an idea of the situation and the conditions of life for Hungarians since Vojvodina was restored to Serbia:

- After the end of the Second World War and the conclusion of the new peace treaty, more than 40,000 Hungarians disappeared under conditions that have not been explained—right in the heart of Europe.

- The statute of autonomy for Vojvodina was suppressed in 1988, without asking the residents for their opinion, and the region was placed under the direct control of the Serbian government.

- Since last year, the Hungarian language, already strongly discriminated against, was no longer acknowledged as the official language of Vojvodina.

- A dozen laws were voted up this year, with the strong imprint of discrimination with regard to Hungarians.

- The most recent decree, of Jan. 30, 1992, re-carved the different districts of Vojvodina, *splitting up by force* the Hungarian areas and pasting the pieces together in other areas. In this manner, they are trying to prevent the Hungarians from regrouping and defending their interests at the local or regional level.

The ghost of Ceausescu

These measures of ethnic dilution and breakup had been practiced and imposed under the communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania.

- Finally, there has been a declaration enforcing the use

Six republics of the former Yugoslavia



of the Cyrillic alphabet in the region.

- The closing of Hungarian schools, kindergartens and other buildings, theaters, and museums dedicated to this culture and language is expected;

- Whereas the Serbian Orthodox Church has, thanks to the state, recovered the property that had been confiscated under Tito, the Catholic Church, which represents the Hungarians and Germans, has had nothing returned to it.

- Hungarian and German publications have received no state subsidies and have been subjected to censorship.

- The Hungarians are systematically discriminated against in employment, etc.

More than anyone else, it is the declared Hungarians who are being forcibly recruited for Serbia's aggression and conquest of territory in Croatia and Bosnia.

The methods are reminiscent of the worst years of Stalinism, where people's houses were surrounded in the middle of the night, and citizens were purely and simply taken away. Even though Hungarians only comprise 3% of the total population of Serbia, Kosova, and Vojvodina, they make up 8% of the Federal Army, that is, more than double!

This is why the young declared Hungarians are fleeing into Hungary—their numbers have already risen to 25,000. Several Hungarian villages in the region of Baranja-Slavonia have been entirely razed and their inhabitants deported. The churches are systematically destroyed, in order to leave no trace whatever of Hungarian and German birth certificates.

Where will this process end? These measures are in the interests of no sector of the population.