
Interview: Gen. Martin Spigelj and Prof. Sdravko Tomac

'If you want peace in the Balkans, lift the arms embargo against Croatia'

Gen. Martin Spigelj (ret.) became the head of the War School of the Yugoslavian Army before the Serbian war. His last official military post was as commander of the 5th military zone of former Yugoslavia, the most important, which included Zagreb and Ljubljana. He retired from duty a few months before Yugoslavia broke up. When the Serbs launched the aggression against Slovenia and Croatia, General Spigelj had intended to fulfill the agreement with Slovenia and join in the military defense of Slovenia against the Serbian attack and to prevent the Yugoslavian Army, as it was evacuated from Croatia, from removing the heavy weaponry at the same time; this policy was not that of President Franjo Tudjman. General Spigelj was removed from his post as defense minister in 1991, before the fall of Vukovar. He is now politically active, and works with the new opposition movement "Libertas," led by Zvonimir Separovic, Srecko Jurdana and other Croatian patriots.

Also taking part in the interview was Prof. Sdravko Tomac, member of the political science faculty at Zagreb university. He is a former vice president of the Croatian parliament, and in 1991 was briefly a minister in the "democratic unity" government of President Franjo Tudjman.

The interview was conducted on April 29 in Brussels by Katharine Kanter.

EIR: The most important in war is the concept of victory. How shall we win the war against Serbia?

Spigelj: First, you have to realize who is the aggressor and who the victim. Serbia is the aggressor, but not one which cannot be conquered.

We need the application of force by the international community, to block the border between Croatia and Serbia; and between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, lift the embargo against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, demilitarize Serbia, establish the autonomy of the provinces of Kosova and Vojvodina; the conditions would then exist for refugees to return to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This could be done and would bring a just peace. The aggressor would be defeated, and the victims would not take revenge.

But there is another option: to make the victims of the aggression in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina able to fight, with the assistance of the United States and other friendly states, through aerial support, and thus solve the problem through a direct war, a direct conflict.

Of course, there are other well-known options, all of which would do very little to stop the aggression and all of which, practically speaking, lead to rewarding the aggressor. For instance, the earlier Geneva proposals for the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Either, in my opinion, they do not solve anything, or, they bring peace at any price, which will, in a year or two, simply get us another war.

In short, I am for the equal status of two options: political and military. But in order for a political option to be effective, a military option must precede it.

EIR: What do you think of the state of the Serbian armed forces and the supply situation?

Spigelj: Serbia has much overestimated its military capability. That happened because no serious fight has so far been put up against Serbia. They have some superiority in war techniques, and they have practically limitless access to ammunition. It's an open secret that they get significant help from Russia, China, Iraq, and other countries. But their weak point is the quality of men they have at their disposal, a weakness for which they will not be able to make up. Unlike their victims, who are, in these terms, on much more solid ground.

EIR: What do you mean by the quality of men?

Spigelj: Economically, Serbia is going through a real catastrophe. It underlies all this. A single significant defeat on the battlefield for Serbia, would lead to her final defeat. My position is that Serbia is weak, and must be defeated. But the world does not allow this. The world has tied our hands, while giving the Serbians free rein. That is the absurdity of the modern world.

EIR: What about England and her control over the United Nations?

Spegelj: I will be open. I think the official British policy has been negative, and remains so, in this terrible conflict. England's official policy is to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina, which will benefit Serbia alone.

All obstruction to any effective response against Serbia, has come from the British side. That is a fact.

The British should tell us what their motives are. I draw your attention to the very real obstruction by Gen. Sir Michael Rose in Bosnia, who has been *observing* the military action. Practically everything from the side of [British "mediators" Peter] Carrington and then [David] Owen—all this was a skillfully performed Serbian policy, in fact. So I evaluate official British policy as *absolutely negative*.

The present policy of England may well lead to the same results as [British Prime Minister Neville] Chamberlain's did in his time, unless other powers in the world oppose this.

EIR: Do you mean world war?

Spegelj: Yes, a European and world war. The relations of the United States and Russia contribute to it. The United States is trying to keep Yeltsin in Russia in a tolerable state, so [the Russians] get concessions concerning the Serbian issue. But Russia will never be preserved if Serbia is to be upheld in her aggression.

EIR: U.S. Vice President Albert Gore went to Russia in October 1993 and said of the International Monetary Fund, that the IMF stinks, that we should stop this nonsense, that we should lift the IMF conditionalities against Russia.

The IMF went to Zagreb in April, and called for setting up a "blue zone" as a condition for credits to Croatia. In this manner, the IMF has been directly involved in the conduct of the war.

Spegelj: I will only say that the real help to Croatia is either concessions, or participating in building its own objects, which means, *no credits*. Credits are a tragedy for Croatia. Because of the unstable state in Croatia, the capital doesn't flow in. We have a vicious circle of blockade, because fresh capital can enter Croatia only on the basis of self-interest, which is lacking because of the instability. So when my President, Tudjman, speaks optimistically about foreign assistance, help from abroad, that is illusion. Humanitarian aid, fine, but this is not what we really need.

Tomac: The policy of the International Monetary Fund is to drag East and West into the catastrophe. This is one of the worst world problems. Major clashes will occur because of that.

The Russian experience should teach something to the Croatian government. It should not fall into the same trap. . . .

The promises of the International Monetary Fund were bait for the Croatian government; but they will bring nothing.

In the final analysis, Croatia is far too small to solve the problem of the International Monetary Fund; only the American state policy can actually crack this problem, because the recession, unemployment, and the lack of industrial growth are all the fruit of the IMF's policies, which have nothing to do with development; but rather with purely financial concerns.

I agree with the analyses of the Schiller Institute on this issue, which are the deepest ones I have had occasion to see. The British, and a part of the American policy structure, stand behind the IMF, in the background, and are part of the cause.

EIR: In Croatia itself, you must get the Krajina back, but it seems that the present government is not committed to that.

Spegelj: In this ocean of absurdities, this is one more, that the Croatian government is not *committed* to getting those occupied territories back, *unless* it can be done without the use of armed force. Whereas, the Serbians say that they have got those territories by force of arms, and they will keep them. For us to say that we will wait for them to be returned peacefully, is like saying you would join steel to water: You cannot do this without the use of force, and the whole Croatian people will very soon become aware of it. We cannot stand for this kind of status quo much longer.

In my view, the occupied territories in Croatia will be gotten back only within the context of the Bosnian-Herzegovinan war, and only by the use of armed might. I have first-hand knowledge, and unfortunately, I am persuaded that without the use of force, nothing will be achieved. But to this end, there must be marked changes in Croatian policy, whereas the present government will not take the necessary steps. We are determined to change this, and the forces of change have become more numerous and stronger, perhaps, than even the government; but, they are not formally in power.

We shall not get back the occupied territories without war. So you may expect war in Croatia as well. This has to do with how we shall defeat the Serbian aggressor everywhere.

EIR: That's what you meant when you said that it has to be seen in the context of the war in Bosnia?

Spegelj: Exactly, yes.

EIR: What about Unprofor peacekeeping forces and the United Nations, and the way they use so-called humanitarian aid in Bosnia?

Spegelj: Regrettably, I have nothing positive to say about that. They act under the influence of [U.N. Secretary General] Mr. Boutros-Ghali and of official British policy, and they thrust aside any other policy, such as that of Germany.

The U.N. policy is “peace at any price,” cease-fire at any price, to separate the armies at the line of Serbian territorial conquests, and then get around to “solving” things over countless years.

In other words, what the aggressor has taken, belongs to him, and the victims’ losses are for them to swallow. For us to accept such a thing is an absolute catastrophe. These forces, the observers, and the purveyors of humanitarian aid are acting upon those premises, so the U.N. is now like the League of Nations before World War II: impotent in every respect.

EIR: Bosnians have told me: It’s lucky for us we don’t have the artillery and tanks, because if we did, the British Unprofor troops would find them immediately and destroy them. It’s lucky for us that we have to conduct a partisan war with only infantrymen, because otherwise, the British would make sure that all of our heavy equipment was destroyed. And they said that the British are strangling every main road.

Spegelj: Please do *not* compare the British with *our* fighting capabilities. If *we* had not “taken care” of the British, they would be beaten by the dark by now. That is, they would have been killed.

The British forces are very small, very dispersed. They are not dangerous for anyone—except in the intelligence service. They have been sent to do intelligence jobs, not to solve military questions in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

EIR: Intelligence for the Serbians in Bosnia?

Spegelj: Yes, exactly. But militarily, they’re insignificant. Otherwise, it’s our territory and we have utter superiority upon it. The British have nothing to look for there. Should we be brought to the point where we must enter a phase of guerrilla warfare, for Serbia and her supporters it will turn to a debacle. In that case, we shall transfer our military activities to all the other areas—to Kosova, to Vojvodina, Macedonia. We shall attack where *we* want; not where the enemy expects us to.

EIR: It’s a good idea.

Spegelj: Only then would all the roads be blocked. It’s not what you say, that the British already control them. It’s not so.

Imagine 600,000 guerrilla fighters equipped with modern weapons entering the fray; this is possible when they enjoy the support of the people—which we have. That is why I don’t believe that the British will start attacking somebody.

EIR: In your view, should we break off these Geneva talks, all of this palaver?

Spegelj: I think the Geneva talks are already broken. There is no more. A kind of bypass has been done around Geneva and Norway. From the United Nations, through the represen-

tatives of the United Nations in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a bigger bypass: The United States and Russia are directly communicating over the negotiations.

That’s why Mr. Owen feels neglected. My personal opinion is that he should withdraw into the dungeon where he used to be. Either he and his people understand nothing, or they work for money. The result of their work directs us to this kind of accusation that I have just made.

The Croatian and Bosnian governments fell into the trap of Geneva, too. They started drawing up these maps, tunnels, viaducts. . . . Only a naive child would not see through Owen when he starts speaking about tunnels and viaducts—a miracle of naiveté! But the Croatian and Bosnian governments accepted this as serious.

EIR: Now they have a “contact group,” as they call it, set up in London. The British speak of a four-month cease-fire, during which the “future map of Bosnia” is to be discussed. In mid-April, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said in a joint press conference with the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, that nobody thinks that we can go back to the way things were at the beginning.

Spegelj: I don’t know which “beginning” he means. What beginning did he have in mind? The creation of the world? Then he’s probably right.

This four-month cease-fire and a firmer peace is an idea coming out of Washington. It may be useful. Serbia has not finished her military operations; she has not attained the core of her aims. What Serbia has taken so far, cannot survive without the final objective of the operation.

In other words, time is not on Serbia’s side. The victims could exploit this opportunity. I do not mean that we should await God’s mercy, but rather, prepare ourselves for the final battle. Any attempt to “solve” this with map tracing, or whatever, will only touch off another, wider war.

Serbia must be demilitarized, Bosnia-Herzegovina must retain her internationally recognized frontiers, and the same applies to Croatia, without any separatism or “states within a state,” and so on. These are the only maps that will secure peace in the Balkans, and perhaps even European peace. Should we be forced to enter a prolonged war, of uncertain outcome, we shall internationalize the crisis militarily, just as we have internationalized it politically. We shall broaden the conflict. We shall have no other choice but to spread the war, to bring the great powers before a *fait accompli*, and make them do what they have to do.

EIR: You spoke of Vojvodina, and said you would take the war into Kosova.

Spegelj: Yes, but also, form alliances abroad, with countries which will come to our aid, and then we shall no longer allow Unprofor to control our roads and so on. Because they have only been protecting the aggressor. The great powers chose the policy, and we shall respond to it.