

government had been required by the First Republic, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hunters were registered with the local police at Prague.

Firearms prohibition was an essential aspect of the repressive Nazi and Communist regimes from the Nazi occupation in 1939 through the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Two world wars left firearms all over Europe. Do Czechs obey all the laws, or have unregistered guns been secreted under the Nazis, Communists, and even today's Republic? As victims of Russian and German aggression, the Czechs have become crafty people. One Czech told me with a coy look that he did not know of anyone who would violate a gun regulation. Right.

Driving me back to Brno, my hosts talked of the problems of the Czech Republic but expressed optimism for its future: the lost economic security of the old socialist regime did not equal the true economic development ushered in by the advent of the free market. My own observations give a bird's-eye view of the Czech people in transition: creaky elevators in old buildings, people hard at work repairing the old and building the new, good red wine that costs \$1.60 a bottle, vegetables and puppets for sale in the market, beautiful historic castles and great buildings that were never bombed in World War II, landscape scarred by irresponsible socialist industrial policies, beautiful forested areas peppered with quaint villages, old dilapidated train cars with no working toilets, and modern train cars with all the conveniences. Here is the transition from communism to free enterprise by a people who never believed in the former.

A taxi driver in Prague told me in German as I got out on the main boulevard to beware of robbers. I responded that we have plenty of them in America, too. Private crime has replaced government crime; that's progress, because individuals are never as capable as tyrannies of killing large numbers of innocents. If some Czechs are buying pistols for protection against thugs, they will still have them if (or is it when?) the Russian thugs eventually come back. Pistols will not stop tanks, but offer one more means of resistance.

As my Česká Air flight climbed over Prague, I wondered how long this small country's newfound freedoms would last. The historic aggressors have been Russian and German expansionists. The

best guarantee of freedom against the dangers they pose was and still is the right to keep and bear arms.

*Stephen P. Halbrook is an attorney in Fairfax, Virginia, and author of That Every Man Be Armed: The Evolution of a Constitutional Right.*

## Letter From Serbia, Part II

by *Rajko Doleček*

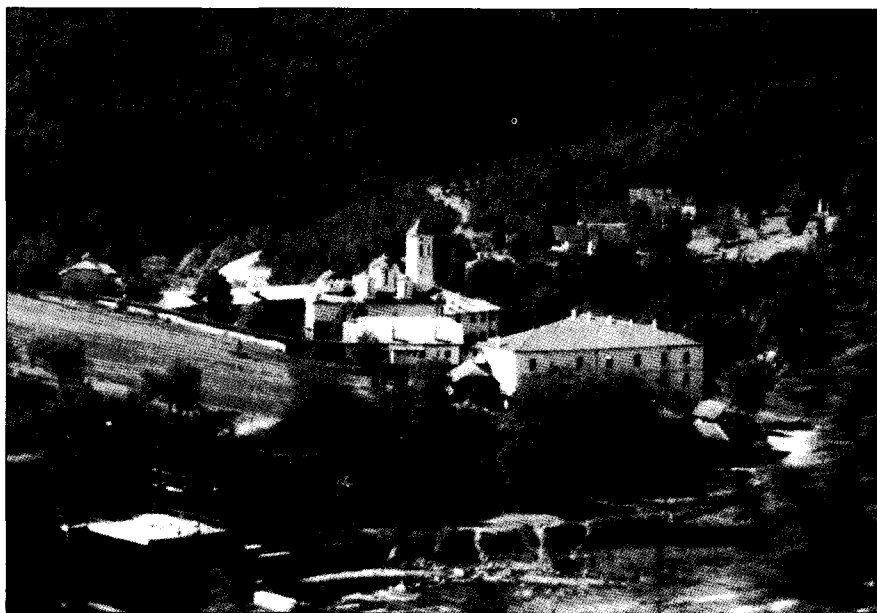
### The Prospects for Peace



I returned to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) last May and July and noticed that Serbia had changed dramatically since my last visits there in late 1993. The financial reforms of a 75-year-old Serbian university professor, Mr. Dragoslav Avramović, who has solid banking experiences in Yugoslavia and abroad, had stemmed the soaring inflation rate almost overnight. Prices had stabilized if not dropped; agricultural and industrial production had increased, the budget was balanced, and incomes, even pensions, had risen. The hard currency reserves markedly increased. Yu-

goslav citizens could even exchange their dinars for German marks one to one (up to 50 dinars). To avoid the printing of additional dinars to pay for the good crop (the present reserves of food could last for almost two years), Avramović had minted large quantities of gold coins, the ducats, with gold from Serbian mines. They were accepted with enthusiasm. Instead of minting only 100,000 as originally planned, a half-million of them were to be available soon.

Unemployment was still running around 30 to 40 percent in the FRY, largely because sanctions had cut off the country's trade links. But some towns were prospering, such as Vranje, in southern Serbia. Over half of its 65,000 inhabitants were employed. The giant YUMCO textile plant, one of the largest in Europe, had 13,000 employees; it imported some 10,000 tons of cotton last year alone. The SIMPO furniture manufacturer had about 6,000 workers, and the shoe manufacturers at Kostana make some five million pairs of shoes a year; the tobacco factory and the lead and zinc mines were thriving, too. These ventures make up the backbone of prosperous Vranje, whose bustling mayor Mr. Tomić is very proud of his town. The famous Serbian author Bora Stanković was born there, and the town was alive with characters from his plays. For the spiritual heritage of one millennium, it was exciting to visit the orthodox monastery St. Prohor Pčinjski near Vranje, to stay there overnight in the old hostel, to en-



*St. Prohor Pčinjski Monastery near Vranje*

joy the excellent cuisine—including the delicious trout from the Pčinja River—and to meditate and pray at the monastery.

But troubles still abound for many FRY citizens, particularly for the pensioners who worked for many years in

and Rumanians put their losses at four to five billion U.S. dollars each, the Ukrainians at two to three billion, and who knows how much Macedonians have lost. All of them had received only empty words and promises.

Serbs were pleased to hear from Bonn



*Milo Djukanović, prime minister of Montenegro (center)*

the West. Because of the sanctions, their pensions have been blocked, and because of the restrictions on visas, it is difficult if not impossible for them to travel to the country where they worked (e.g., France, Germany, Sweden) to collect their money. They were affluent before 1992, now they depend on whatever welfare is available.

As a consequence of the successful financial reforms, the shops and supermarkets were full once again. The Belgrade cafés and restaurants were bustling, and tourism was in full swing. Most of the gas stations were still closed, with the exception of a few private ones, but hundreds or even thousands of “gas smugglers” were selling from their private stocks. The authorities do not interfere, because these men supply the fuel that the private transport system needs. Many of the smugglers were Albanians, and Montenegro, the twin republic of FRY, is flooded with less expensive Albanian fuel. Of course, most Albanians hate the Serbs, but money and greed often trump history.

The neighboring countries had long since lost faith in America’s and the E.U.’s promise to compensate them for the huge financial losses caused by sanctions against the FRY. During an international meeting of journalists in the FRY last May, the Bulgarians, Greeks,

that the Nazi past of Mr. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the former foreign minister of the German Republic, had finally been publicized. He had never forgotten the important role that the Serbs and Yugoslavia played in defeating Germany in the two world wars, and many Serbs to this day hold him primarily responsible for engineering the Yugoslav tragedy.

There was much discussion about the Pope’s planned visit to Belgrade. Most members of the orthodox clergy objected to the idea. The Vatican had too vigorously supported the secession of Slovenia and Croatia; it even beat the E.U. in its rush to recognize them. Nor has the Catholic Church ever apologized to the Serbs for the role played by many Catholic clergy in the holocaust of Serbs from 1941 to 1945 in the independent state of Croatia. During that time, some 800,000 Serbs were murdered by the Croatian fascists and their Muslim allies from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many Catholic clerics collaborated with them. More than 200,000 orthodox Serbs were forced to convert at gunpoint. There were some Catholic clerics who protected and even risked their lives to save their Serbian brothers, but other Vatican circles helped the most notorious killers to escape at the end of the war to South America, Australia, and the Middle East. This was the well-known “rats channel,”

or “monastery path.” One of its organizers was a Croatian Catholic cleric, Krunoslav Draganovic, the secretary of the order of St. Jerome’s Brotherhood. Dozens of other clergymen helped him. The recent book by Simon Wiesenthal (*Justice Not Revenge*) recounts this story.

The availability of much-needed medical supplies and drugs had not improved. Babies and children, the chronically ill and the aged, were still dying from lack of treatment. The situation in the *Republika Srpska* (the Serbian part of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and in the Republic of Serbian Krajina had reached the crisis stage. Diabetics were still dying because there was no insulin and they had no money to buy it on the black market. The infant mortality rate was still rising ominously. One of the few international organizations trying to help was UNICEF.

Among the main topics of discussion in Serbia was the problem of Bosnian Serbs after the Contact Group Ultimatum. Would they accept it? Most people I spoke to said they would not, because the plan did not settle the constitutional problems of the three entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They believe it is impossible to have all of them in a single state or union, especially after this horrible civil war in which nobody is completely innocent. But the main obstacles to the peace agreement were the maps. Most of the Serbian people of Bosnia and Herzegovina live in its western part, where their capital city Banja Luka is located. Serbs from the Serbian Republic of Krajina are also there. They are connected with their brothers in eastern Bosnia and with Serbia by a thin corridor whose narrowest part, near Brčko, is only four to five miles wide. The Bosnian Serbs and the Serbs from Krajina opened this corridor in heavy fighting in 1992 and 1993. It is vital for their survival. Yet the Contact Group maps gave Brčko (at the Sava River) to the Muslim-Croatian federation, thus cutting the vital lifeline and leaving western Bosnia and Krajina at the mercy of, alas, hostile Muslims and Croats! It is said that this vital corridor would be replaced by a viaduct or something like one under U.N. protection, perhaps even with Russian soldiers patrolling it. But can the Bosnian Serbs trust the U.N.? Many Serbs see this as setting the stage for a possible replay of the massacres of 1941 to 1945.

The official FRY might try to per-

suade or even compel the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan and to try to improve the maps and the constitutional arrangements through negotiation at a later date. But is this realistic? Couldn't (or wouldn't) the hostile European-American coalition block any and all changes favorable to the Serbs?

During a press conference, the Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanović discussed the problems of the modern Montenegrin merchant fleet. Montenegro had possessed about 40 ships. But immediately after sanctions were imposed, many ships were blocked, mostly in Western ports. They were not allowed to leave, and Montenegro had to pay about 100,000 U.S. dollars per day to the port authorities where the ships had been "arrested." If they refused to pay, the ships were to be confiscated and sold. A few of them were sold at auctions, at very low prices. Shipping, tourism, and aluminum mining represent about 70 to 75 percent of the Montenegrin income.

The Serbs I spoke to were still saddened and disappointed by the disinformation about them that continues to issue from the West. Why do Western media refuse to report Muslim and Croat offenses during the present official cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina? What kind of stories would have been written if Serbs had initiated the offenses? The most depressing fact for the Serbs remains that they have been betrayed by their former allies, whom they considered to be close friends: the Americans, the British, and the French. How were they so easily manipulated?

When the Muslims and the Croats were killing each other during their war in 1993, thousands of Croats were fleeing their homes in Travnik, Konjice, Bugojno, etc., ahead of advancing Muslim forces, fearing reprisals. When they reached the Serb-held territories, they were treated in Serbian hospitals and then transported to Croat-held areas. During the last days of the autonomous western Bosnia (the Bihać enclave) of Fikret Abdić, tens of thousands of Muslims fled to the Serbian Republic of Krajina, seeking protection from their Muslim brothers. Did CNN, the *New York Times*, or *Time* report this?

*Rajko Doleček is a professor of medicine at the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic.*

## Letter From London

by Derrick Turner

### The Barbarian Marshes



Celt, Roman, Angle, Saxon, Dane, Norman, Pict—and Bengali, Afro-Caribbean, Turk, Arab, Chinese. Glyn-debourne, swan-upping, roast beef and Maypoles—and arranged marriages, bowing to Mecca, *halal* meat, chop suey. Harris tweed—and saris. Anglicanism and Catholicism—and Diwali, Rastafarian New Year, Ramadan. Milton, Shakespeare—and Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison. All of the former, traditionally British things have been, are being, eclipsed by all of the latter, non-British things. Although I am not opposed to change as such, I rue all of these particular changes, which dilute and endanger the culture I hold most dear.

Although I am not British myself—I was born in the Irish Republic, to Anglo-Irish, Protestant parents—I have always been conscious of some affinity for Britain, and particularly England, which loomed on my horizon like a kindly elder relative. I regularly came here on holidays when I was younger, to marvel at the great cities and the beautiful landscapes where the houses stopped. I always had a strange sense of being at home here, however new and big it may have seemed to my juvenile eyes. I have an impression in my mind, still clear and fresh, which nourished, and nourishes, my superpatriotism—of new-leaved plane trees in the sunlight, the sound of sonorous bells, the sight of black taxis, walking under the trees and feeding ducks in St. James's Park, the glitter of the river and the smell of the autumn in Kew. It simply never occurred to me that England could be other than irreducible.

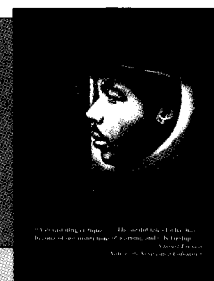
It was only after I came to live in London, in mid-1988, that I began to see that I had been hopelessly naive. Maida Vale, Kilburn, Ilford, West Hampstead, Whitechapel, and Deptford, none of which featured on any tourist's list, became more than just names to me—I lived in them all, in quick succession, six months here, a couple of months

there. And I roamed far and wide, my *London A-Z* in my jacket pocket—I plunged into the terraced backstreets of Hackney, Bethnal Green, Mile End, the Isle of Dogs, Barking, the City, Southwark, Kensington, Ladbroke Grove, Islington, and Stepney, the very names like quotations from half-remembered history texts, or extracts from great books. I spent days walking alone along rainy or dusty residential streets, wandering around ancient churches and graveyards and exploring overgrown alleys dense with purple buddleia, nettle, and bits of bicycle, and I would read up later about the areas I'd visited. I wore a poppy on Remembrance Day, went to the Last Night of the Proms, and saw the fires blaze up on Bonfire Night. In a fairly short time, I came to know London far better than Dublin, and far better than did most Londoners. Soon, I could tell people the best way to get to Artillery Row, or where they should catch the number 53.

But my peregrinations around London were not just an education in geography, but also in the vexed questions of ethnicity and identity. I was continually

#### THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., PLAGIARISM STORY

Edited by THEODORE PAPPAS



A publication of The Rockford  
Institute. 107 pages  
(paper). Only \$10 (shipping and  
handling charge included).

TO ORDER BY CREDIT CARD,  
CALL:

**1-800-383-0680**

OR SEND CHECK OR MONEY  
ORDER (MADE PAYABLE TO  
THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE)

TO:  
KING BOOK,  
934 NORTH MAIN STREET,  
ROCKFORD, IL 61103  
(Discounts available for bulk orders.)