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## Interview: Franjo Cardinal Kuharic

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# Croatia needs new model, free from collectivism and unbridled capitalism

"I want to take the opportunity of this interview to cordially thank all the people of good will and generous heart who supported us, who are helping us, and have acted on behalf of the recognition of the free state of Croatia," says the archbishop of Zagreb, Franjo Cardinal Kuharic. As the first phase of this war for Croatian independence draws to an end, the spiritual leader of the Croatian Catholics cordially agreed to review the situation with *EIR* in a conversation with Umberto Pascali on Jan. 25. The interview has been translated from Italian by *EIR*.

"I also salute all the Croats in America, Canada and in the whole world, they have been the collective ambassador of Croatia. Now is the time to devote ourselves to the reconstruction of what has been destroyed. I think we need to organize diocese to diocese and city to city links, sister city relations, for example, to rebuild the many churches that have been destroyed or damaged, the villages, the cities of Croatia."

During the months of the terrible war of aggression against Croatia, Cardinal Kuharic has exerted himself in thousands of ways for his people, both in Croatia and abroad, yet at no time has he made any concessions to localism and he has vigorously fought all vindictive and revanchist tendencies. The dialogue with the Serbian Orthodox Church, despite his lucid analysis of the "earthly" manipulations to which it has been subjected, remains one of the Cardinal's basic commitments.

At the same time, the Cardinal's deep affection toward his people and his concern for the future, for the reconstruction, are evident. He hopes for the pursuit of a "cautious" method based on the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, distant from both collectivism and "unbridled capitalism." In talking with a magazine published in the United States, the conversation necessarily touched on his visit here at the beginning of November, his heartfelt speech on Nov. 11 to the U.S. Catholic bishops meeting in Washington, and his letter to George Bush.

The Cardinal wrote in that letter, in part: "The new Constitution of Croatia clearly guarantees the full rights of all citizens who live in the democratic state of Croatia. The Church is making every effort to bring about peace and reconciliation. The good that the Church seeks for the Croatian people, we also desire for all people who live within our

borders. We have this same wish for the Serbian people. . . . This war of fierce aggression on our homeland and our freedom is a blemish on the entire body of Europe and the free world. . . . We are of the firm opinion that in order that peace may be achieved and the aggression of war come to an end, it is necessary that full diplomatic recognition be given to the republics of Slovenia and Croatia, as well as to the other republics which seek, under international law, independence and security within their own borders.

"Having full confidence in your personal efforts and stand for freedom and justice, we implore you, Mr. President, to intercede on our behalf. With your great sense of compassion and the authority and position you have in the world, you can bring an end to this war so that peace once again can come to the suffering people, not only Croatians, but all others who are feeling the devastating effects of this senseless violence. With great hope, we anticipate your understanding and help."

But not only did that help not arrive, but today the Bush administration stands stubbornly isolated in its non-recognition.

**EIR:** After six months of war of aggression, Croatia is now recognized by a large part of the world. As the spiritual leader of your country, what is your overview at this point of the war of independence?

**Kuharic:** The recognition is a reality and favorable to peace. The governments that have recognized Croatia as an independent, sovereign, and free state have confirmed the fundamental principles of the coexistence among the peoples, because all peoples have the right to live free in their own homeland, in their own land, in order to build positive, friendly relations with other free peoples. Thus now a recognized Croatia enters into the circle of nations, of the free states of Europe and the world, and can represent itself, can speak on its own behalf, can express its culture, its history, and can develop its identity. Thus it is an absolutely positive situation.

Thus now all the states that have recognized Croatia should insist so that their decision be respected and replicated both by the Serbian government and Army, so as to stop a war against a free and independent state. The cease-fire is fragile, it is true, but it holds despite provocations because the Croatian Army does not respond to those provocations. We hope there will now be a strong dialogue for the peace

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of Croatia and all these lands.

**EIR:** When you visited the United States in November, you gave an extraordinary speech in front of the Bishops' Conference. You spoke also about a letter you had sent to President Bush, asking that he intercede for recognition. But the administration is still digging in its heels. The Croatian community here is very disappointed and hurt by this attitude. Many Croatians stress how among the very first states to recognize the independence of the United States was the republic of Dubrovnik, the Croatia of the time. . . .

**Kuharic:** It is true, but now the situation is very different. I hope the United States will come out for recognition because they promised that, if Europe recognized Croatia, then they would follow suit. We rely on hope. In diplomatic circles a joint U.S.-Russia recognition was rumored. In a recent interview to a magazine from Zagreb, the U.S. ambassador, Zimmerman, said he favored Croatia's freedom. He said also that, maybe, there is the possibility to change the U.S. position. Why does the United States not recognize us? I do not know. Maybe there are special reasons. . . .

**EIR:** The Croatian Catholic Church has always had a crucial role in the national history. . . .

**Kuharic:** The Croatian Catholic Churches follow the universal principles that are valid for everybody and everywhere. Thus, the principles of human rights, of national rights, of the dignity of the human person, of freedom, of justice. It pursues these principles also in the democratic state of Croatia. It always calls for peace, for forgiveness, reconciliation, and works so that nobody falls into the temptation of hate and revenge. We are always and everywhere in favor of the respect of the rights of all men and of the minority, so that there will be a real democracy. This is what the Croatian Church says today.

**EIR:** You have been one of the protagonists of the recent Synod that saw the Bishops of both eastern and western Europe gathered together for the first time. The Synod stressed the necessity of the strengthening Europe. How do you see the role of Croatia in this new Europe?

**Kuharic:** Croatia is a country with a great majority of Catholics. It is a country with 13 centuries of evangelization. It is part of western Europe. Now, in this particular moment, Croatia must carry out a great moral and spiritual renewal

because, after so many years of communism, one can see, the profound consequences of an atheistic system perpetuated by the school system and the mass media. We must reawaken the Catholic conscience of the people. A major work of re-evangelization, a major moral and spiritual renewal awaits us. And this is true regarding both eastern and western Europe.

**EIR:** If on one side there is the clear danger of communism, on the other there is the danger of free-market extremism. Two parallel dangers.

**Kuharic:** There are two forms of atheism. There is a theoretical atheism, which denies God, which denies also the spiritual dimension of the individual and his eternal destiny, and there is another atheism that does not deny God, but denies to God the right to guide the life of man. This practical atheism says: Yes, yes, God exists, but I want to live as I please, not as God has commanded in his precepts. It is a liberalism that leads to moral nihilism. It is present in the West exactly as it is present in the East under the form of the consequences of theoretical atheism: as pessimism and hedonism.

**EIR:** One of the elements of this phenomenon is reflected in the economic domain, in the sense of unbridled liberalism; for example in the repeated efforts to apply, in countries barely liberated from communism, the super-monetarist model associated with the name of Jeffrey Sachs. We have seen this model in action in the Yugoslavia of three years ago, in Poland, and today in Yeltsin's Russia. Applying this "shock" method creates more problems than it pretends to solve. Many say that there is no better way to cause a country to return to communism.

**Kuharic:** The Pope wrote clearly in the encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, that we must follow neither socialism, nor unbridled capitalism, but that also in economics a new model must be found, in which man, the human person, will be the norm for justice; and hence the individual will be subject of the economic system, and not [an object to] be overwhelmed, and dominated. Today modern society, after communism, after the experience of collectivism which has had so many negative results, but also after the experience of unbridled capitalism, this society must rethink how to organize social life so that it may be truly just, in favor of the dignity of the individual human being, of the family, of life. Today we

must study more attentively the social doctrine of the Church.

**EIR:** The government of ex-Yugoslavia hired Jeffrey Sachs with his "economic shock therapy."

**Kuharic:** Let us hope that we do not have to follow these models. I hope that Croatia will be cautious. I think that Croatia will try to find its way. Now here they are studying laws. We have a Constitution and now we must apply it with legislation. It is much work, many laws left over from the communist period must be changed.

**EIR:** How do you see the future of relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church?

**Kuharic:** The Catholic Church is always open to dialogue with the Orthodox Church. I want to reemphasize that the Church opposes absolutely any kind of vengeance and all hatred. At the moment a dialogue between the two churches does exist. The Orthodox Church agreed to it; just this week there was a meeting in St. Gall, Switzerland between representatives of the two churches, under the patronage of the European Bishops' Conference. I have just received the delegates who returned from the meeting. At the end it was decided to take the dialogue up again here in Zagreb or in Belgrade. Now, one hopes for a little more peace.

**EIR:** The recent letter from the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch, Pavle, seemed to many to be very polemical.

**Kuharic:** It was a political letter, perhaps dictated by someone [else]. Let us hope now that the atmosphere has changed. The Orthodox Church in Croatia must accept reality. Until now it has not recognized the Croatian state. It recognized only the Yugoslav state. The Orthodox Church in Croatia must have all the guarantees and all the liberty for carrying out its pastoral work. We are determined to do everything so that their liberty will be guaranteed *in toto*, but they must accept the reality of the Croatian state. They cannot expect the creation of a Greater Serbia. There will be no Greater Serbia. There will be a Serbian state and there will be a Croatian state. One would expect that the Serbian Orthodox Church should make its voice heard against aggression, against the destruction of churches, of hospitals, villages, cities. Because if there were a war on Serbian territory, if Croatia were to wage a war of aggression against Serbia, we Catholics would raise our voices against this, and we have the right to expect the same from them.

More generally I must say that the relations between the Orthodox and Catholic churches have been undermined by prejudices. The Serbian Orthodox Church is perhaps too much tied to national policy, a policy which is not always in favor of justice toward one's neighbors. Perhaps this exerts some influence over the attitude of some of the representatives of the Orthodox church. I would wish to see a free church, open to sincere and fair dialogue, and I want to hope that relations are more favorable to ecumenicism.

## Situation getting desperate in Armenia

In late January, *EIR's* correspondents in Germany received a dramatic report from the Yerevan member of parliament Haik Babokhanian on the situation in Armenia. The most dangerous developments are in Karabakh, the Armenian enclave within the territory of Azerbaidzhan, the neighboring republic of the former U.S.S.R. which has been in conflict with Armenia for several years. The people are suffering under a total blockade by the Azeri military, which has cut off cities and villages from electricity, gas, water, and food supplies. The people have no bread. In addition, in recent days five cities have been bombed by the military, and several civilians have died as a result.

The troops of Mutalibov, the President of Azerbaidzhan, are directly going against the civilian population. Every day citizens of Karabakh are being massacred, often in such a bestial way, that the population becomes terrorized. Karabakh is completely cut off from Armenia.

Things are not much better in Armenia itself, which continues to be blockaded by its Muslim neighbors. Shortages of gas, oil, and electricity are rampant. Very little gas remains to heat houses and apartments in the cold of winter. Children go early to bed in order to try to huddle together for warmth. Electricity is turned off six hours a day. Due to lack of energy, the factories are idle, so people are without jobs and wages. The liberalization of prices means that families are uncertain of meeting the high costs of necessities. With a monthly income of 300 rubles one can no longer afford butter at 135 rubles a kilogram or meat at 75 rubles/kg. Particularly hard hit are families with many children and old people, whose incomes are under 200 rubles. Poverty and despair are spreading fast. Because the civil war is raging in Georgia, and has still not ended, rail links to Georgia have also been blocked. The only way to get out of the country is by airplane, but because of lack of fuel, at most two planes a day leave the airport in Yerevan.

No aid has been offered from the West, in contrast to numerous offers of help extended to Moscow. The only aid is coming from the Armenian diaspora in Europe and America. The governments are doing nothing. Bush's recent conference in Washington about coordinating help for the cities in Armenia is understood as mere theater, which will do nothing to help the people in these winter months.