

Bush ignored appeal of Dubrovnik's bishop to halt Serbian aggression

The following letters were sent to President George Bush during the early phase of the Serbian war of aggression against its neighboring republic, Croatia. The letters' author, Mons. Zelimir Puljic, bishop of Dubrovnik, recently met with representatives of EIR in Dubrovnik and requested that the letters be published. The letters to Bush were never acknowledged, a fact which, together with the contents of the letters, speaks for itself. Spelling and punctuation are as maintained in the originals, in the interest of authenticity.

Dubrovnik, 5.11.1991.
Mr. Bush, President of USA
WASHINGTON

Mr. President,

My name is Zelimir Puljic. I am the bishop of Dubrovnik, the city you heard about before the war calamity began. I must say that it was a real "Apocalypse." I witnessed attacks and violent destruction from air, sea, mortars and tanks. A real nightmare. Violent detonations made the walls of the old City tremble. It was also damaged by artillery fire. It was shocking to watch the forest burn, houses, churches and cemeteries vanish into powder. Even more desperate is to see the troubled faces of the refugees without a home for over four weeks now. With 60,000 inhabitants, without water and electricity, in complete isolation. Dubrovnik is *the biggest concentration camp* of Europe.

In these parts of Croatia there are neither military facilities, or ethnic [ethnic] problems, either. We have been attacked and occupied without reason. The only "guilt" of this people is their true devotion to the challenge of the first free democratic elections one and a half year ago that got rid of the communist regime with the full support of the West. And now the democracy can not be defended from the huge power of the communist army and the "Greater-Serbian" hegemonism. This war in Croatia was at the beginning neither "national", nor "religious". No. It was the war of ideology. Here democracy, human rights and sovereignty of a people are defended.

I am the bishop of the "libertarian city of Dubrovnik" that knew how to cherish and preserve its freedom and indepen-

dence over 450 years. On Lovrie nac—its most beautiful fortification—Dubrovnik chiselled its motto: "Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro" i.e. "Freedom must not be sold for all gold". Freedom has become the symbol of the town's history. Its flag flies a capital "L" for "libertas". For the first time in history, Dubrovnik is without its freedom, sieged and isolated from land and sea. Arrested by the federal army. Assaulted and bombed. Its unique cultural treasure is endangered by the destruction powers of the "serbian and montenegrin" armies. All happening before the eyes of the world. I can not by weil [but wail] and "reproach" together with Habakkuk, the prophet:

"Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and thou wilt not hear? Or cry to thee "Violence", and thou wilt not save? Destruction and violence are before me; wy dost thou make me see wrongs and look upon trouble?" /Cfr. Habakkuk 1,2-4/.

Dubrovnik is not Croatian only. It is the historic monument of the world. We are therefore wondering about the slow reactions of the western governments. I am sure America should take to the "liberation" of this town from the contemporary barbarians and pirates /that demolish and loot my diocese/ for these two reasons, at least:

a. FREEDOM that symbolizes the history of Dubrovnik, is the symbol and pride of the politics of the USA /"Statue of Liberty"/.

b. When the USA were emerging from the fierce Civil war /1776/, the Republik of Dubrovnik did not hesitate to recognize freedom, sovereignty and independence of the United States of America. Dubrovnik was so the first European state to recognize the new country of USA /Cfr. C. Michael McAdams, "Croatias and Slovenia's Fight for Autonomy". In: The Christian Sciens Monitor, from 13. august 1991/.

Also, our Italian neighbours should not look unto these calamities with a cool eye. A great number of cultural monuments was made by famous Italian masters. One should not forget that, at its time, Dubrovnik was a "superpower" on the sea. Its fleet numbered 280 vessels, represented by 50 consulate outposts in the Mediterranean, Europe and Asia. Dubrovnik helped whenever required by the jeopardized. In 869, under Rector Domagoj, it helped to Bari to reject the

Saracene siege. In the legendary battle at Lepant[o], on October 7, 1571, Dubrovnik contributed with 33 vessels to fight off the Turks together with other countries of the Christian Europe.

Can Dubrovnik and Croatia count now on the solidarity and help of Europe and America?!

Mr. President,

I do hope you will understand this letter in the right way. I am not asking for mercy or privilege. I accept the suffer, the problems and the troubles of my people. But, I raise my voice against injustice and violence over the population of Dubrovnik. I raise my voice for the protection of the people, cultural heritage and the multitude of valuable monuments.

I am sure you will use your authority so that peace, human lives, culture, democracy and human rights be preserved.

In such hope, please accept my sincere respect and my greetings in Our Lord,

[signed and embossed]

Mons. Zelimir Puljic
Bishop of Dubrovnik
Poljana M. Drzica 2
50,000 DUBROVNIK

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May 6, 1992

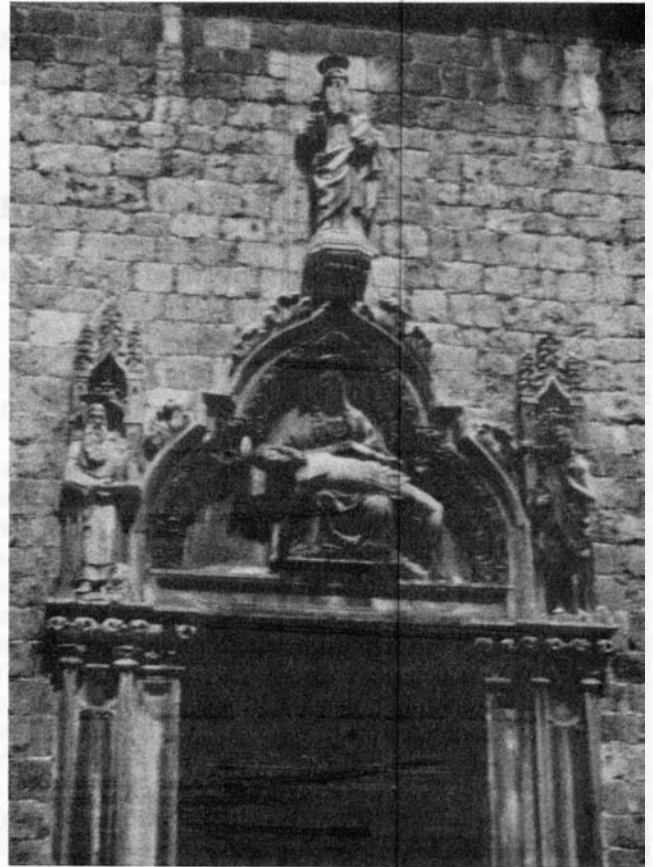
Mons. Zelimir Puljic
Bishop of Dubrovnik
C/O Father Mate Bizaca
870 West 8th Street
San Pedro, C.A. 90731

The Honorable George Bush
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter which I sent to you in November 1991, during the most brutal attack to Dubrovnik in its history by probably the most brutal Army on the globe (Serbian dominated Yugoslav army and Serbian irregulars). As a Bishop of Dubrovnik I expected at least some comment from your office. I understand that there is a possibility that your office did not receive my letter of concern since I sent it from Rome at the time when you met his Holy Father, John Paul II. At this time I am on a pastoral mission to my American Croatians through the United States of America as well as my native Bosnia-Herzegovina (where I come from).

As you are aware the brutal war spread through different cities, towns, and villages in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many Croatians and Moslem are being slaughtered every hour.



A "Pietà" over a doorway in Dubrovnik, one of the city's countless artistic treasures, in 1985, before the Serbian assault.

Destruction of properties particularly cultural monuments, churches, mosques, synagogues, and hospitals are outraged. As of today, there are over 250,000 people displaced from Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to today's L.A. Times the total number of displaced and refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina is over one million. That makes 12-15% of the total population of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina is displaced or refuged. We Croatians have always looked upon America as a leader of Democracy. Croatia is paying a very high price to defend Democracy of all people in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina of their religion and nationality.

While your Administration issued warnings and an April 29th deadline for Serbian aggression to stop; we are witnessing more serious attacks; cluster bombings of the civilian population such as a bombing of a Grade School in Slavonski Brod on May 2nd where 18 children were killed.

I hope Mr. President your Administration will make a stronger measure to stop aggressor. This would no question benefit not only Croatians and Moslems, but Serbians too.

Sincerely,
Mons. Zelimir Puljic
Bishop of Dubrovnik