

CROATIA

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der. She and her family stayed in Split for a while, and later on, Martin came and provided an accommodation for them in Zagreb. Martin said all of the international humanitarian organizations in Caplina were expelled by HVO. HVO's intention is to allow those international organizations to come after ethnic cleansing is done.

Now she and her family are in Zagreb, hoping to immigrate to the United States soon. She said that she couldn't go back to her hometown even if the war ended now because her mind is filled with hatred against those who committed crimes, especially Serbs. "I just can't forgive those who did horrible crimes to Muslims," she said. "At least not my generation." I talked with several Croats in Zagreb. One humanitarian worker from the United States said Croatian people in general are getting more pro-Croats. "I'm often frustrated when I talk with Croats. Many of them are getting close to even fascists," he said. One Croatian peace activist said to me, "When I say I'm working in a peace organization, people often laugh at me." Croatian people are not satisfied with the current situation - economy, politics and social life. My impression was that many people were complaining about others but get blinded about themselves. It seems that the Tudjman government is using that someone-to-blame strategy, in these days against Muslims. As a matter of course, movements in Croatia are a reflection of what is going on in BiH. But only innocent people are victimized because of it. Croats are complaining about Muslims. Business people (hotel managers) are complaining about displaced Croats. Many people are complaining about the government. Most people in Croatia have stereotyped ideas about Slovenes and Serbs. Everyone is complaining about western countries.

One Croat woman talked about Muslim refugees. She believes Muslims from BiH are generally rich so that they can afford to buy flats in Zagreb while ordinary Croats are struggling to get them. That's a typical stereotyped opinion about Bosnian Muslims. The reason why Muslims can get flats is that they are supported by humanitarian organizations and their relatives in foreign countries. Now Croatian authority want Muslims out of the country, or at least from resort places, while promoting tourist attractions. Muslims want to get out of the country if they can because they no longer feel safe in Croatia. Every Croat I talked with believes Croats are just victims in these conflicts of ex-Yugoslavia. It's true, but also the Croatian government and its army are contributing to the process of destruction of BiH by helping HVO although they are officially denying. "People don't like the Tudjman government," one Croat humanitarian volunteer said. "But people, especially young, are becoming indifferent to politics." General apathy and ignorance are dangerous signs of Croatian society in times of crisis. At the same time, Croat humanitarians and peace activists are promoting consciousness of peace, justice and human rights among the Croatian population.

I left Zagreb by bus for Split at 5:30 p.m. on July 31. I was sitting in the back, surrounded by HVO soldiers. They turned to be very cheerful and friendly. One of them, who is an Australian Croat, talked to me in English, and we talked about war, humanitarian activities and each other's plan. He was an independent volunteer and working for humanitarian organizations like Red Cross. But he was totally fed up with these supposed-to-be-humanitarian organizations, which are actually doing business in Croatia without consideration for the refugees' situation. He doesn't like mainstream media and politics. He explained how some members of big, international organizations are doing business, exploiting the situation of refugees, like selling medicines to local pharmacy for profit. He has been transferring one refugee center to another to help refugees and displaced people as much as he can. He also wants to find out the truth is behind the main-stream media with his own eyes. He sometimes risks his life. Why is he doing this? "I love my home country," he said. "I want to defend it in a true sense." He has basically no trust in big humanitarian organizations who are delivering aid to refugees. "If I go back to Australia," he said. "I don't give a damn to those organizations." He also talked about President Bill Clinton. "What we can't forgive Clinton is that he betrayed us and all the innocent people," he said.

I also talked with one basketball coach. He mainly talked about differences between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. He said Slovenes are too cool and behave like Germans, Serbs have hot tempers and like fighting and Croats are between the two. In the region like Krajina, Serbs have a gun-oriented society, and they are considered "well-trained soldiers" in both spiritual and practical terms. It's not like New York City or Los Angeles in the United States, where people "need" guns for defense, but that's the main part of culture of the region. He has many Serb friends. After the war started between Croats and Serbs, one of them left for Serbia. "I don't understand him," he said. "Why is nationality more important than ourselves as individuals?"

The bus was going on the road all of the way down to Split. The bus was going to cross the bridge called Maslenica, in a village which was regained by HV in this January. Croatia needs Maslenica bridge and some Dalmatian hinterland that was occupied by Croatian Serbs

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