

DEMILITARIZATION OF THE ISLAND VIS

By Tonči Kuzmanić

Updated informations and plans concerning the project run by The Peace Institute in Ljubljana and announced in the previous issues of The Intruder 3

The main presuppositions concerning the project were:

1. the occupation of the island by YPA (YPA was without interruption on the island since september 1943; the occupation of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) is presently characterized by the independence building processes in Croatia after the "elective fall" of socialism), and regarding to the war situation in Croatia, **the expectation that YPA would try to stay on the island** at least one year.

2. the endangered young Croat state was in a position of having to defend extremely large frontlines throughout the previous Yugoslav state, so as a result, we could expect that **Croatia as a state should not have opportunity or even power to liberate the island**. Any step towards the military "liberation" should mean ecological destruction of the island as a whole.

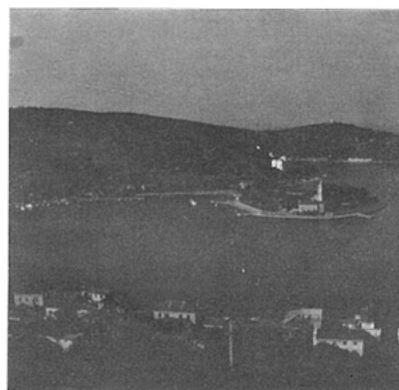
3. relatively strong interests concentrated in Italy and European Community to demilitarize the Adriatic Sea in which the island Vis play an important role due to its high level of militarization.

As a consequence of these presuppositions we thought of a **full or complete demilitarization**. As a matter of fact, this was based on the premises according to which we expected that the concretization of conflicting interests around the island would result in a sort of **"self-blocade of interest" or a situation in which "total" demilitarization should become feasible**.

However, it seems that some events are going on quite differently. The last informations from the island (having daily contacts with people from Vis), and my visit there at the end of December 1991 (where I gave lectures on demilitarization), let us believe that the processes for the retreat of YPA are starting. YPA is removing the weapons meant for the training of ex-Yugoslav troops, but not the ones assigned for the "real defence" of the island. Namely, the island was an important training center, especially for navy artillery, for different sorts of military exercises, manoeuvres.... But simultaneously, among the last informations are data about new missiles coming into. In

other words, **the last events could be interpreted in two basically different ways: first, as a real retreat** (officers' families already left the island, including the ones in which the wife was from the island), **secondly, just as temporary retreat** due to the YPA needs of weapons at other frontlines in Croatia and elsewhere. During the last days of 1991, there were negotiations between YPA and the Croatian government (maritime minister) on the island. The official report mentioned "the withdrawal of YPA".

Anyway, it looks as if the disentanglement would be the absence of more or less desired "self-blocade of interest" in which total demilitarization seemed possible. In other words, we should turn to a specification of a more concrete project based on relatively different assumptions. First of all, we should start from the position of "partial" or "possible" demilitarization in connection with the more than probable **presence of newly founded Croatian Navy**.



What does it mean?

Our previous aim of total demilitarization is still remaining, but with important corrections. If, in the previous concept, the concrete circumstances would have allowed the realisation of the project at once, abruptly, now we should search for successive projects, for a step by step action leading to total demilitarization sometimes in the future. In other words, we face a completely "normal" and "usual" situation in which we are forced to start from the very beginning, from the "point zero".

What should be done?

The first step should be similar as it was in the previous concept: setting up the international committee for demilitarization of the island. Second step: the efforts towards the installation of the peace office, third one: setting up a ground for the future peace training camp, schools and other peace infrastructure on the island. Shortly, the idea is the "occupation" by different peace activities of those spaces which, perhaps, would be abandoned by

the army.

Our present intentions are as follow:

a. **Discussion dedicated to the present situation as such**. The main problem is the fact that Croatia and YPA (so the island too) are still in war or, at least in semi-war situation, in which circumstances are **changing from day to day**. For example, observed from today's point of view, it seems that the solution for the island vis might not be possible before a solution to the problems of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as one among the most important problems within the complex and complicated Yugoslav conflict net.

b. Discussion about the **concrete operationalisation of the institutionalisation** (international committee for demilitarization of the island) of the project as a European project, as a common project of different peace movements, organisations and individuals interested in this kind of civil action, peace research and non-violent conflict resolution.

c. Forming the **peace-office** on the island, concretisation of the tasks for that "working-place"

e. Discussion about the sub-project dedicated to **the peace camp with first international peace camp action this summer on the island...**

f. Establishing the **list of tasks for the future**, timetable of actions, and coordination.

Unfortunately, we still don't have the possibility to contribute to your travel costs, but -as it was underlined in the previous letter- we still can compensate with sea food and the beautiful nature of the island. The strongest moral and material (financial) support up to now came from the German Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie. Mr Klaus Vack informed us that, besides 3000 DEM dedicated for our mailing, telephone costs, first travel expenses..., **a committee for the support of the project of demilitarization of the island Vis was established in Germany**, with important members such as prof. Dorothee Solle, Peter Hartling, Dieter Lattmann, Gudrun Pausewang, Jens Reich...

The very beginning of the project should be a peace conference on the island at the beginning of April, 3rd-5th of April 1992.

Please, let us know if you intend to join us, as soon as possible.

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