



The Holy See

*Discurso al primer Embajador de CROACIA,
Excmo. Sr. Don Ive LIVLJANIC**

3 de julio de 1992

Mr. Ambassador,

I am happy to receive from Your Excellency's hands the Letters accrediting you to the Holy See as the first Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia.

1. In this nation's relations with the Apostolic See, this audience marks a historic milestone, which I would like to emphasize. The Croatian people's bonds with the Church of Rome are very ancient, as you yourself have recalled, Mr Ambassador. Now that Croatia has regained its independence these bonds are becoming even closer. I would like first to define their spirit in terms of the esteem inspiring your history and culture, the sentiments of friendship and respect which I have for your people, the communion in the Catholic faith shared by the majority of your countrymen.

You yourself have described the history of the Croatian people who have lived in that land for 13 centuries, their culture and their deep religious convictions. I felt the fervour with which you expressed your sentiments and those of your compatriots as you begin your mission. I would be grateful if you would thank His Excellency Mr Franjo Tudjman, President of the Republic of Croatia, as well as the members of the Government, for the message of respect and confidence which they have entrusted you to give me.

2. The grave events surrounding the proclamation and recognition of Croatia's independence have, as you know, attracted the complete attention of the Holy See, which has not ceased raising a voice to ask that the arms be silenced and dialogue begun. The Church will not stop proclaiming that the defence of human rights and the rights of peoples cannot be accomplished through violence, but only through loyal, persevering dialogue. In receiving you today, I express once

again the hope that all the citizens of your Republic may experience a firmly established peace.

At the present time, it rests with the Croatian people, who have such a rich cultural identity, to build their future on solid foundations. Only a constitutional State, in which each inhabitant enjoys the respect of the other, where each person's rights are respected, where each citizen enjoys freedom of expression and can work for the common good, can ensure the dignity and the happiness of all. You mentioned that the Church upholds human rights, both those of individuals and of peoples. She does so because of her lofty understanding of the nature of man, a creature loved and saved by God and of the vocation of man, called to form a fraternal society of solidarity, one guided by the concern to ensure the good of all its members. The rights of the person are recognized in the surest manner when they are the object of a clear, free consensus and inspire public action on behalf of prosperity and the physical, intellectual and spiritual development of individuals, families and communities.

Your nation is faced with the task of strengthening its institutions in such a spirit. No one can be left by the wayside.

It is especially important to allow minorities to find their rightful place in the country, and your people's often tragic experience testifies to this. Society's cohesiveness obviously cannot be gained at the price of exclusion for any reason whatsoever, not even in the name of an exaggerated nationalism. A people's nobility is shown by their ability to coexist peacefully with other peoples, remaining open and welcoming.

Mr. Ambassador, you stressed Croatia's desire to participate fully in the life of the European continent. For its part the Holy See, from the point of view proper to it looks with favour on the various forms of cooperation and exchange which are leading the countries of Europe to a better understanding. Since the outbreak of the Second World War notable progress has been made in the direction of peace. The present situation in your country and region shows how much is still to be done. We also wish, in particular, that the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe will permit an ever better non-violent handling of differences, and foster aid between nations which history has made neighbours. In such a context the nations which have recently recovered what I like to call their "personality" should participate actively in international life and find the support which they need.

3. The majority of your compatriots, Mr. Ambassador, belong to the Catholic Church, with a fidelity which has been confirmed down through the centuries. Thus, in receiving the representative of Croatia, I want to express an especially affectionate greeting to the Catholics among your people, who have a bond with the See of Peter, as is evidenced by the number of pilgrims whom I have the joy of meeting in Rome.

The Church, for her part, asks for no privileges, but rather wants to take her proper place in the life

of society, too, a right which the communist regime had denied her. I know that the faithful among you seek to place their talents, their Gospel spirit and their sense of fraternity at the service of the country. I hope that they may make their generous contribution to the life of the nation, inspired by the faith and enlightened by the saints and the great witnesses who have shaped such a beautiful tradition. Trials have weighed heavily upon them during recent decades; I pay homage to all those who have suffered in order to remain faithful to their baptismal promises and their membership in the Church and, as you have done, with emotion I recall the great figure of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac. During recent events the Catholic communities were also affected by the great suffering inflicted on the people; their churches and institutions suffered a great deal of destruction; they also knew how to welcome their brothers and sisters who had to leave home and seek refuge. In this context, I express my desire that the international community will not be sparing in giving aid to these numerous refugees, the victims of such a deplorable conflict.

I am sure that the hope and boldness in the hearts of the Pastors and faithful will enable them with the grace of God to rebuild an ecclesial life focused on the future, uniting all generations in the communion which the Lord wills. It is the time for conversion and the reconciliation which is always to be renewed. I encourage your Catholic countrymen to pursue the dialogue with their brothers and sisters from other Christian communities despite the difficulties, in a spirit of openness, in the patient search for the unity of those who received the same gift of Baptism.

The Bishops, as well as the State authorities, have invited me to make a Pastoral Visit to the Church in Croatia. You renewed this invitation which responds to one of my deepest desires. When circumstances permit it, I hope to make such a pilgrimage and come to affirm my Croatian Catholic brothers and sisters in the faith and to meet all the people of that beloved land.

4. Now your mission as the representative of the Republic of Croatia to the Holy See is beginning. Diplomatic relations for their part, express the deep bonds which have already been formed over many years; I hope that they will be ever closer and more trusting. You can be assured that you will find here in my assistants the support which you need. I hope that your work gives you satisfaction and will be rewarding.

I invoke upon all Croatians the Intercession of the Apostles of the Slavs, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Saint Nicolas Talević, St Leopold Bogdan Mandić, and the other saints who have marked the spiritual history of this people. May our Lady, Queen of Croatia, sustain them with her motherly support.

With all my heart I pray that God's blessing may descend upon you, the Authorities of your country, your loved ones, your co-workers and all your compatriots.

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