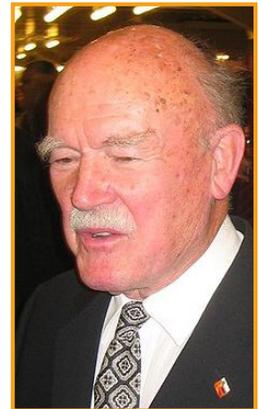


## **FRANC BUCAR, 1959 YUGOSLAVIA (SLOVENIA)**

Retired President, International Paneuropean Union for Slovenia

“I do not want to be told the truth. I have to find it by myself. But I like to be helped to find it. America has helped me a lot in my way.” This is how France Bucar described his 1959 Eisenhower Fellowship. By the age of 18, Bucar had found his political calling as he became active in the underground movement to fight the Nazis in Yugoslavia. After imprisonment in an Italian concentration camp, he escaped from a train on his transfer to a German concentration camp, and returned to Yugoslavia and joined the partisans. He went on to join the Communist Party of Slovenia and fought the battle to liberate Klagenfurt. After the war, he joined the government, and while serving as the Secretary of the Economic Committee in the People’s Assembly of Slovenia he began his Eisenhower Fellowship experience.



Dr. Bucar embarked on his fellowship to understand how the United States had succeeded in addressing the problems presented by a capitalist economy. He wanted to see the practical applications of the relationships between state organizations and the economy, the extent to which private enterprise was free of state control, and the role of state organizations in organizing the marketplace. Dr. Bucar spent 10 months on his fellowship in the United States, meeting with leaders in politics, business, and education.

Upon his return to Slovenia, he taught public administration at the Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana. Here he began voicing his criticism of some aspects of the Yugoslav Communist system, and embarked on the risky path of freeing himself from the Communist Party. He continued to openly critique the system throughout Europe, and in the 1980’s went to the European Parliament to propose a blockade of economic aid to the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. In 1989, he co-founded the Slovenian Democratic Union, the first opposition party to the Communist regime, and was elected as the first Chairman of the Slovenian National Assembly in 1990. On June 25, 1991, Dr. Bucar formally declared the independence of Slovenia, and was one of the authors of its constitution.

In reflecting on his experience as an Eisenhower Fellow, he credits the fellowship with giving him the strength and knowledge to bring democracy to Slovenia. “I came from a small country behind the Iron Curtain. In the USA, I was exposed to a completely different open world with political and, above all, intellectual freedom. I could no longer live with the difference when I returned to my country. I became a political dissident. I lost my position as a university professor and was banned from all political and public intellectual activity. But this helped me, on the other side, to become one of the leading actors in the overthrow of the Communist regime in 1990 and to become the first president of a newly elected democratic parliament. Without the Eisenhower experience, I doubt I could have coped with that task.”

Dr. Bucar most recently served as the president of the International Paneuropean Union for Slovenia until May 2012.

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