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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAR - 5 1992

MAR 9 1992

Dear Ms. Bentley:

Thank you for your letter of February 11 to Deputy Secretary Eagleburger in which you express concerns about the revisions in the electoral law made by the Albanian Peoples Assembly to bar ethnically based parties, including the largely ethnic Greek political organization Omonia, from participating in the March 22 national elections.

The United States views free and fair elections, and the right to freedom of association, as fundamental guarantees of human rights and evidence of commitment to international accepted standards.

To underscore our strong opposition to any restrictions in the right to association, our Embassy in Tirana has expressed to the Albanian Government our distress about the revision in the electoral law, emphasizing that such a ban contradicts CSCE principles on human rights, including the rights of members of minority groups, and on holding democratic elections.

As it happens, opposition political parties had already begun working with the Albanian Government to find a solution which would permit participation by members of Omonia in the parliamentary elections next month. In fact, the Unity for Human Rights Party was formally registered on February 26 by the Albanian Ministry of Justice and will field candidates in the forthcoming elections. Indications are that Omonia may use the new, multi-ethnic party as a front to field Greek candidates and thus skirt legal prohibitions on ethnic organizations taking part in the elections.

We have also underscored to political figures, both in and out of government, the need to resolve this matter in a more permanent satisfactory manner. If I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Sincerely,

Janet G. Mullins
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

The Honorable
Helen Delich Bentley,
House of Representatives.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

APR 24 1992

APR 22 1992

Dear Ms. Bentley:

I am responding to your letter of February 6 regarding the Human Rights Report on Yugoslavia. You disagree with some aspects of the findings and feel that the Report has omitted a number of events which you deem important.

In our view, and the view of most observers of the crisis, the JNA is indeed squarely allied with the Government of Serbia. Although the two are independent of one another and their alliance may yet break down, we have concluded over the last several months that the army and the Serbian government have common interest, and acted in concert in the war in Croatia. In fact, during the fall of 1991, Serbian officials acknowledged this in public statements. In addition, during private conversation with Ambassador Zimmermann, President Milosevic, while disclaiming Serbian involvement in the JNA attacks on civilian targets in Dubrovnik and Vukovar, defended both operations.

In the second section of your letter, you raise a number of specific cases of human rights abuses perpetrated by Croats against Serbs. Because of the scope of the tragic developments in this country last year and the difficulty in establishing the reliability of individual accounts, the 1991 Human Rights Report on Yugoslavia could not describe in detail individual cases of human rights abuses. The report describes the situation that produced the civil war and lawlessness in Yugoslavia, and details some of the more serious cases on which reliable information was available at the time the report was written. The fact that these and other cases were not described in our report does not, of course, mean that we find them any less appalling.

It is not unusual for there to be a lag between an event and the time that accurate information concerning it becomes available. Thus, some incidents occurring late in the year may not be reflected in the Human Rights Report. For example, the Serbian government's report on the destruction of Serbian Orthodox churches in Croatia, released in January, was not available when the report was prepared. Similarly, when our

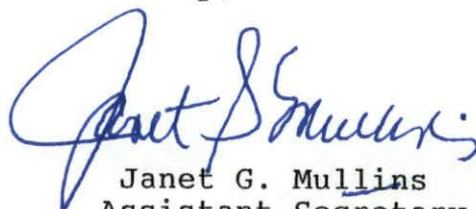
The Honorable
Helen Delich Bentley,
House of Representatives.

account of the disappearances of Serbs in Gospic was written, 23 people were known to have been involved, whereas later information indicates that much larger number of people have disappeared. Our Embassy in Belgrade has raised the Gospic affair at high levels of the Croatian government. Information concerning human rights abuses committed in 1991 is still coming to light and, we believe, this process will continue for some time to come. We are continuing to track this information and the details provided in your letter will be helpful to us in doing so.

The 1991 Human Rights Report on Yugoslavia clearly points out that both sides in the Serb-Croat war have been guilty of atrocities and of denying basic human freedoms and details specific crimes committed by Croatian forces against the Serbian community in Croatia. Our Embassy in Belgrade and the Consulate General in Zagreb have made it their highest priority to convey to the State Department an accurate picture of the complexity of the Yugoslav crisis and the extent of the violence between Croats and Serbs there. We strongly believe that they have succeeded and that the 1991 Human Rights Report on Yugoslavia is fair. We continue to raise human rights matters with Serbia and Croatia; it is fundamental to our efforts to support a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We hope this responds to your concerns regarding the 1991 Human Rights Report on Yugoslavia. Our Embassy in Belgrade and our Consulate General in Zagreb continue to carefully monitor the human rights situation in Croatia, Serbia and the other republics and to comprehensively and fairly report to us on human rights abuses throughout Yugoslavia.

Sincerely,



Janet G. Mullins
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs