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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

GERYLD B. CHRISTIANSON, STAFF DIRECTOR
JAMES P. LUCIER, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

February 20, 1991

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Committee on Foreign Relations

THROUGH: Jerry Christianson and James P. Lucier

FROM: Michelle Maynard and Cliff Kiracofe

SUBJECT: Hearing on U.S. Response to Civil War
in Yugoslavia

On Thursday, February 21, 1991, at 2:00 p.m., in SD-419, the European Affairs Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee will hold a hearing on Yugoslavia. The hearing will focus on the evolution of U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia and the prospects for change of that policy in light of developments in Eastern Europe, the human rights situation, recent republic activities, and the possible break-up of the federation.

Senator Biden will preside.

Attached for your information are background and suggested questions.

BACKGROUND

Recent Developments in Yugoslavia

Federation vs. Confederation

Yugoslavia's political future is in question. Under the current system established by the 1974 Constitution, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a multiethnic, federal state comprised of six republics with a collective presidency. The 8-member federal presidency, which includes representatives from the two provinces -- Kosovo and Vojvodina -- remains dominated by officials appointed by the former communists. The presidency is currently chaired by Jovic, a Serb, who will be succeeded in May by Drnovsec, a Croat according to normal rotation procedures. Although Kosovo's assembly was abolished last year and its representatives cannot participate in talks on restructuring the country, Kosovo is still represented in the federal presidency.

Ethnic ferment runs high, and severe tensions exist between those republics advocating a "confederation" of six separate states and those calling for Yugoslavia to remain a federation. Slovenia and Croatia, the most prosperous of the

republics, have taken the lead in advocating the formation of a confederation government patterned after the European Community. Both republics are threatening to secede from Yugoslavia if the collective government does not agree to decentralize.

Serbia, the largest republic, on the other hand, would like to see Yugoslavia remain a federation. Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia's President, has stated that the only way Serbia would agree to a confederation would be if all Serbs throughout the country are brought into a single state.

The issue of federation vs. confederation has been taken up by the leaders of Yugoslavia's six republics in a series of meetings. To date, no agreement has been reached.

On the Brink of Civil War or Military Coup?

At the end of January, 1991, a major confrontation between the Yugoslav military and Croatian security forces was averted after last-minute negotiations between the federal presidency and President Tudjman of Croatia. Many observers believe that Yugoslavia was at the brink of civil war, and that it could return to the brink at any time.

Rumors during the last week in Yugoslavia raise the spectre of a coup by the Serbian-dominated military. The role of the army in a potential conflict between the federal government and the republics is in question. The Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) would like to maintain the current federal structure. Communists continue to dominate the army, in which Serbs make up 70 percent of the officer corps.

Recent Elections

Within the last year, all six Yugoslav republics have held multi-party elections. Non-communist, reform-minded governments have been formed in Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, while in Macedonia, a group comprised of both non-Communist and Communist parties was elected. In Serbia and Montenegro, Communist parties or their successors were victorious. In addition, Slovenia held a referendum in December in which nine out of ten Slovenians voted to secede from the federation.

According to the State Department human rights report, international observers judged the elections to be generally fair. A notable exception, according to the report, was in Serbia, where the official media was blatantly biased in favor of Milosovic. The elections, while welcomed in principle by the United States, have had the unintended effect of exacerbating ethnic tensions.

Economic developments

In addition to calling for political unity, Federal Prime Minister Ante Markovic continues to advocate free market economic reforms. While Markovic's economic reform program met with initial success in combatting inflation, progress toward genuine economic reform has since stalled.

Croatian and Slovenian leaders oppose granting the federal government additional economic powers for fear that Serbia would dominate the federal government and gain additional control of the economy.

Kosovo

During the past year, several hundred deaths and other casualties have occurred due to ethnic unrest in Kosovo -- a region where the 90 percent Albanian majority is being repressed by the government of Serbia.

Until the spring of 1989, when Serbia sent troops and armed police to strip Kosovo of most of its legal authority, Kosovo had been an autonomous region of Serbia. In the summer of 1990, Serbia suspended the Parliament and closed Albanian communications and media centers in Kosovo. In the past two years, several hundred deaths and casualties have occurred due to unrest in the region. Abuses (including blockades, discrimination, beatings, and arrests) continue. Some observers fear that Milosevic's campaign against Kosovo and its Albanian population is part of a larger scheme to make Serbia supreme in Yugoslavia.

U.S.-Yugoslav Relations

Until 1989

From the time that Josip Brosz Tito broke with Joseph Stalin in 1948, until the Eastern European revolutions of 1989, the United States had considered Yugoslavia to be unique among its Eastern European neighbors in its independence from Moscow.

U.S. policy sought to encourage Yugoslav non-alignment through economic and military assistance. Most military aid ended in 1960, when Moscow began to send weapons to Yugoslavia, but the United States has continued to fund a small military training program. Economic assistance to Yugoslavia ended in 1967, but Yugoslavia continues to enjoy Most Favored Nation trading status, and it receives Commodity Credit Corporation and Export-Import Bank credits.

As a Communist country and the founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia often championed the causes of developing nations, and in several cases, the United States and Yugoslavia supported different sides of key foreign policy issues (as in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars and the Vietnam War). Since Tito's death, however, Yugoslavia's involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement has diminished.

Yugoslavia's human rights record has proved at times to be a source of tension between the United States and Yugoslavia. Unlike other Eastern European countries, for example, Yugoslavs enjoyed the freedom of movement and emigration. On the other hand, dissidents were sometimes persecuted and political freedoms were abridged.

U.S. Policy Toward Yugoslavia since 1989.

The Eastern European revolutions of 1989 have altered the "special" relationship that the United States had pursued with Yugoslavia. Nationalist causes which had been dormant under the previous regimes, came to the fore in 1989 throughout Eastern Europe. In Yugoslavia, as ethnic tensions have become more visible, U.S. policy has shifted from keeping Yugoslavia away from Moscow to keeping Yugoslavia together. U.S. policy also seeks to promote economic and political reform in Yugoslavia, which is proving difficult in a country in which some regions and republics are ahead of others in the reform process.

From the U.S. Administration's perspective, Yugoslavia's break-up could mean economic strain on the region, revival of old border disputes, increased refugee flows, and possible violence. U.S. policy has stressed that unity cannot be forced and has called for a peaceful settlement among Yugoslavia's republics. However, it continues to regard Markovic and his calls for political pluralism, free market reform, and continued unity as Yugoslavia's best hope for overcoming the current crisis. Accordingly, the United States has avoided encouraging secessionist tendencies in Croatia or Slovenia.

U.S. Response to Human rights situation

In comparison to other newly developing democracies in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia's human rights record no longer seems as commendable from the U.S. perspective. While the U.S. has expressed its dissatisfaction with human rights violations in Kosovo, it has resisted Congressional attempts to tie U.S. aid to Yugoslavia to Serbian behavior in Kosovo.

The U.S. Congress has been more vocal than the Administration on the issue of Kosovo. Last year, for example, Congress approved an amendment to the FY1991 Foreign Operations Appropriation bill that mandates that U.S. aid to Yugoslavia and U.S. support for assistance by international financial institutions be terminated in six months if free and fair elections have not been held in all of Yugoslavia's republics, and if Serbian human rights violations continue. In the 102nd Congress, Senators Dole and Pell introduced legislation that would authorize the United States to provide foreign aid directly to democratic governments at the republic level that exist within countries which include a ruling communist majority in other republic governments and/or at the Federal level.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Administration Panel

For Assistant Secretary Schifter:

Kosovo. Serbia has used armed force to strip Kosovo of most of its legal authority. In the past two years, several hundred deaths and casualties have occurred due to unrest in the region, and abuses (including blockades, discrimination, beatings, and arrests) continue.

1. What has been the U.S. response to these blatant human rights abuses?

2. What pressures can the United States bring to bear on the Serbian republic government and the Federal government with regard to abuses in Kosovo?

3. Some observers fear that Milosevic's campaign against Kosovo is part of a larger scheme to make Serbia supreme in Yugoslavia. Do you agree with this assessment?

Recent elections. According to the 1990 Human Rights Report, multiparty elections in the republics were judged to be generally correct. A notable exception was in Serbia where the official media was blatantly biased in favor of the ruling candidate, Slobodan Milosovic.

1. Would you please elaborate on these findings?

2. Do you believe that Milosovic's control of the media and his smear campaign against the opposition had a direct bearing on his remaining in power?

3. Under the current system, Yugoslav citizens do not have the ability to change the Federal Government through democratic means. What can the United States do to encourage electoral reforms in Yugoslavia?

Comparison with the Soviet Union. Parallels have been drawn between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia -- in terms of both countries' ethnic tensions and the move toward secession by individual republics.

1. Given the recent crackdown in the Baltics, do you believe that the Yugoslavian Government may also resort to using force against secessionist republics?

2. Would you comment on the parallels between the U.S. response to abuses against Albanians in Kosovo and the response to ethnic violence in Soviet republics such as Georgia and Armenia?

For Deputy Assistant Secretary Dobbins:

Confederation vs. federation. Ethnic ferment runs high and severe tensions exist between those republics advocating a "confederation" of six separate states and those calling for Yugoslavia to remain a federation.

1. What do you see as the prospects for a solution to the split between the republics on this issue?

2. What is the United States position on confederation vs. federation for Yugoslavia?

3. What would be the implications for U.S. policy if Yugoslavia were to become a looser confederation modeled after the European Community?

4. Do you believe that the issue of confederation vs. federation can be solved without bloodshed?

The break-up of Yugoslavia. Slovenians have voted in a referendum in favor of secession. In addition, both Slovenia and Croatia have threatened to secede from the republic if agreement cannot be reached on the confederation issue.

1. What are your predictions about the possible secession of Croatia and Slovenia -- Yugoslavia's two most Western republics?

2. What would be the implications for U.S. policy if Yugoslavia were to break apart?

3. Do you believe that Croatia and Slovenia could survive on their own?

Democratic Reform. Federal Prime Minister Markovic has advocated political and economic reform. However, at the federal level, Yugoslavs still do not elect their leaders, and the economic reform program is stalled.

1. Do you believe that Prime Minister Markovic is truly committed to bringing about reform? What obstacles does he face?

2. What can the United States do to encourage Markovic's reform policies?

U.S. Policy. The United States seeks to promote economic and political reform in Yugoslavia as well as the unity of the federation.

1. Given the events of the last year -- most recently the Slovenian vote for secession and the near use of force by the federal army against Croatia -- do you believe that these two U.S. goals have become mutually exclusive

2. What is the Administration's response to the call to provide assistance to individual democratic governments at the republic level?

3. Would not a policy of differentiation among the republics afford the U.S. greater flexibility to respond to human rights abuses in Kosovo?

Comparison with the Soviet Union. Parallels have been drawn between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia -- in terms of both countries' ethnic tensions and the move toward secession by individual republics.

1. Given the recent crackdown in the Baltics, do you believe that the Yugoslavian Government may also resort to using force against secessionist republics?

2. What parallels can be drawn between the two countries in terms of the U.S. response to the issue of the periphery vs. the center?

Public Panel

Confederation vs. federation. Ethnic ferment runs high and severe tensions exist between those republics advocating a "confederation" of six separate states and those calling for Yugoslavia to remain a federation.

1. What do you see as the prospects for a solution to the split between the republics on this issue?

2. Do you believe that the leaders of the six republics and the two provinces can work out a peaceful solution?

3. What is your position on federation vs. confederation?

Kosovo. Serbia has used armed force to strip Kosovo of most of its legal authority. In the past two years, several hundred deaths and casualties have occurred due to unrest in the region, and abuses (including blockades, discrimination, beatings, and arrests) continue.

1. What is your assessment of the situation in Kosovo?

2. In your view, what pressures can the United States bring to bear on the Serbian republic government and the Federal government with regard to abuses in Kosovo?

3. Some observers fear that Milosevic's campaign against Kosovo is part of a larger scheme to make Serbia supreme in Yugoslavia. Do you agree with this assessment?

The break-up of Yugoslavia. Slovenians have voted in a referendum in favor of secession. In addition, both Slovenia and Croatia have threatened to secede from the republic if agreement cannot be reached on the confederation issue.

1. What are your predictions about the possible secession of Croatia and Slovenia -- Yugoslavia's two most Western republics?

2. Do you believe that Croatia and Slovenia could survive on their own?

Near use of force against Croatia. Last month, a major confrontation between the Yugoslav military and Croatian security forces was averted after last-minute negotiations.

1. How close was Yugoslavia to civil war in January?

2. Do you believe that Yugoslavia will return to the brink of war?

3. Do you foresee a situation in which the Yugoslav military would use force against individual republics?