

## COPYRIGHT / USAGE

Material on this site may be quoted or reproduced for **personal and educational purposes** without prior permission, provided appropriate credit is given. Any commercial use of this material is prohibited without prior permission from The Special Collections Department - Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore. Commercial requests for use of the transcript or related documentation must be submitted in writing to the address below.

When crediting the use of portions from this site or materials within that are copyrighted by us please use the citation: *Used with permission of the University of Baltimore.*

If you have any requests or questions regarding the use of the transcript or supporting documents, please contact us:

Langsdale Library  
Special Collections Department  
1420 Maryland Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779  
<http://archives.ubalt.edu>

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JIM MOODY (D-Wis.)  
BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1991

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the current situation in Yugoslavia. I hope that this hearing will contribute to a greater understanding of the unique and complex circumstances that exist in Yugoslavia today.

My personal involvement with Yugoslavia began in 1958, when I served for two years as the CARE representative there. During those two years I traveled throughout the entire country and to every republic. In fact, to every town. I have stayed in touch with developments since that time. Last year traveled to Yugoslavia as a member of the Helsinki Commission delegation, led by Sen. Deconcini and Congressman Hoyer, and I have made shorter visits to the country since that time.

The Complexity of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia is far, far more complex and diversified than any other Eastern European country. It has seven nationalities: Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Albanian and Hungarian. It has six republics: Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovena, and Macedonia. It has five languages: Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Albanian, and Hungarian. Yugoslavia has four peoples: Slavs, Turks, Albanians, Magyars. It has three religions: Orthodox, Catholic, and Moslem. It has two alphabets: Cyrillic and Latin.

Yugoslavia has an incredibly rich and diverse history. Much of the country -- Croatia and Slovenia -- was an integral part of

the Austro-Hungarian empire. Most of the country -- Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia -- were under the Ottoman Empire. Montenegro was never conquered from the outside.

The area that now makes up Yugoslavia has long been the scene of passionate ethnic rivalry and expression, with some periods of intercommunal and inter-religious violence and repression. World War I started in Sarajevo as a result of an assassination sparked by ethnic aspirations.

### Serbia and Kosovo

No region is more complex, nor has a more admirable history, than Serbia, the largest and most diverse republic. Today, Serbia includes two semi-autonomous provinces: Vojvodina and Kosovo. During the Tito period, both provinces were granted a great deal of ethnic expression and administrative autonomy.

Serbs have a rich cultural tradition, with national epic poetry, songs, and artistic forms of great beauty and strength. The modern scholar, Slobodan Jovanovic, depicts the truly glorious history of Serbia and the Serbian people.

No part of that history is more meaningful than the 500-plus year struggle the Serbs waged for their freedom, dating from 1389 when they lost a decisive battle in the heart of ancient Serbia -- Kosovo -- to the invading Moslem Turks. That battle ushered in the five centuries of alien rule and oppression. The 1398 battle of Kosovo is the most important date in all Serbian history, not because of the result of the battle itself, but because it began the greatest trial of the Serbian people and difficulty from which they emerged with their religion, language, culture and Western values intact. They persevered through the long night of oppression. They never lost sight of freedom or belief in the

dignity of the individual.

The Serbian people have always drawn strength from their tradition, dating back to 1389, of fighting for freedom and liberty as they faced modern-day forces of oppression. They fought bravely on the Allies' side in both World Wars I and II.

In regard to Serbian treatment of minorities living within their midst, their record through history has been one of tolerance and fairness.

During World War II, the Serbs refused to give into Nazi pressure for cooperation. As a result, they were subject to full scale attack by the German armies, joined by Fascist forces from several bordering countries. The Nazi occupation of Serbia was one of the most brutal of all of World War II, and many thousands of Serbs gave their lives in organized resistance to that occupation. There are towns in Serbia where every male inhabitant was machine gunned by the Germans in retaliation for some act of resistance.

At the same time, thousands of Serbs living in Croatia or Bosnia were killed by units of the Croation facist organization, the Ustasha, which set up an Axis state in Croatia allied with Germany and Italy. Old ethnic and religious rivalries between Croats and Serbs were rekindled, and thousands were killed by Ustasha guards simply for being Serbian -- that is, for being of the Orthodox religion.

In sum, the Serbs have a long tradition and history of commitment to freedom and liberty, often achieved after terrible sacrifice. In this rich and admirable tradition, Kosovo stands as an historic symbol of the Serbian struggle for freedom. The belief of the Serbian people -- and in fact of all Yugoslav people -- in the dignity of the individual is central to their culture and to their values. Probably no ethnic group in Europe has paid more

dearly over the last six centuries for their beliefs than the Serbs and many of their countrymen.

### Modern Day Yugoslavia

In 1948, at great risk of invasion and war, Yugoslavia broke with Stalin and the Soviet system, and set out on their own path. It was the first country to do what other Eastern European countries are now doing so dramatically,

After an early period of very tight controls over personal expression, press, foreign travel and other freedoms, these restraints were gradually and continuously relaxed. Today personal freedoms in Yugoslavia are generally very secure. Progress is being made in the area of labor rights, depoliticization of the judiciary, and privatization. A new Yugoslav penal code is expected to be approved this year.

The recent events in other parts of Eastern Europe have had significant impact on Yugoslavia, and have no doubt accelerated its march to democracy. Free elections have been held in all six republics. Elections in the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija are scheduled to take place by next May.

### Recent Developments

In Kosovo today, the situation remains very tense. Our Helsinki delegation visit there included extended meetings with political and religious groups of a wide variety. We met with representatives of a number of Albanian ethnic groups, with representatives of the Serbian ethnic minority there, and with Orthodox and Muslim religious leaders.

Our Helsinki delegation criticized the apparently overly-heavy reaction of the police and some local authorities during the riots

last year, in which more than 30 Albanians lost their lives. And we criticized the view by some in Belgrade that the Albanian minority representatives were only "separatists" and "terrorists". Our view was that there were responsible Albanian ethnic groups that wanted more autonomy but not secession from Yugoslavia.

But we also noted considerable suffering and difficulty by the Serbian families still living in Kosovo. Serbian priests have been beaten; Serbian graves desecrated, and Serbian churches burned. The Serbs are a small and embattled minority in Kosovo. The ones we met with told of ethnically-based discrimination and harassment they have suffered. Many Serbs have already fled Kosovo in fear for their safety.

The Serbs in the rest of Serbia have reacted very strongly to this situation. As mentioned above, Kosovo is the birthplace of Serbian culture and has tremendous ethnic, cultural, and religious symbolism. Moreover, the Serbs point out that in the other semi-autonomous region of Serbia, Vojvodina, populated mostly by Hungarian ethnics, there is no comparable conflict and tension.

Our trip found that despite the high state of tension in Kosovo, there is substantial basis for peaceful resolution, particularly if Belgrade officials show leadership and restraint. We were especially impressed by Orthodox and Muslim leaders in Kosovo who expressed great compassion and understanding for the other religion, and for the suffering on both sides.

In fact, we found many individuals of good will on both sides. If political posturing in Belgrade can be reduced, and the legal restrictions on legitimate expressions eased, I personally am optimistic for future peace and democracy in Kosovo.

## Conclusion

The complexity of the situation in Kosovo, and the Serbian-Albanian conflict there, caution against any sweeping conclusions by outsiders. Certainly it would be ill-advised for the U.S. Congress to level condemnation against either side in the highly charged conflict. Doing so would clearly inflame further the tensions and undermine the chances for a peaceful resolution.

This applies as well to the larger question of the unity of Yugoslavia. Critical negotiations between the republics are underway. I believe that the leaders of the republics will finally work together and reach a compromise that will preserve the integrity of Yugoslavia. We must contribute to the process and not undermine it.