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Speech by Michael Lees
In Grand Committee Room
at Serbian Lobby, House of Parliament

January 14, 1992

I have been asked to give a short presentation on the historical background to the Serb/Croat conflict. I want to make clear that I represent nobody but myself. No one is paying me. My interest lies only in getting a lasting settlement of the conflict which spares the Serbs yet another betrayal. I served with the Draza Mihailovich resistance in 1943/44 and in 1985 I discovered some SOE records - evidently released in error - which enabled me to write a book showing how Tito bamboozled Churchill into backing the communist revolution which wrecked Yugoslavia. Called "The Rape of Serbia: The British Role in Tito's grab for power" it was a best seller in Belgrade where it has destroyed the communist inspired version of history. Through that, I got caught upon in helping Serbs fight the new disinformation campaign unleashed against them worldwide by some Croats. I've been to Yugoslavia three times in a year including a trip to the fighting in Krajina. So I know what I'm talking about.

The British establishment must bear a large share of the blame for what is happening in Yugoslavia today. The Serbs were our gallant allies in 1914/18 and in 1941 our secret services incited the Serbs to rebuff Hitler. Churchill said that Yugoslavia had found its soul. That is as may be. Serbia lost everything. But the Croats welcomed the Germans and were rewarded with the Independent State of Croatia including extensive Serbian lands and Bosnia Herzegovina as well. They promptly declared war on the Western Allies and sent troops to the Russian front.

A Serb, General Mihailovich, formed the Yugoslav Army of the Homeland, the first large scale European resistance movement. This was enthusiastically acclaimed by the Allies but received no material support. Then in 1943 Churchill was bamboozled by a Soviet organized disinformation campaign into abandoning these Loyalist Serbs and giving Tito massive support in his Civil War to impose communism. It is not generally known that it was actually the Red Army that liberated Yugoslavia freeing Tito's forces to liquidate the Loyalist Serbs. To justify Churchill's terrible error historians in Belgrade and here fudged history. For 45 years the British establishment supported and idolized Tito in spite of the fact that he was a despot and murderer on a massive scale.

Today it is largely those same people who are baying with fury at the Yugoslav Federal Army which is the last relic of Tito's monstrous regime. We put Tito into power and we are in no position to take the moral high ground.

Whilst the British were helping the Croat, Tito, liquidated loyalist Serbs in Serbia while their brothers in the Independent State of Croatia were being subjected to genocide by the Pavelich Ustasha regime with its policy of establishing a racially pure Great Croatian State.

In 1945 many Ustashe escaped retribution by joining Tito's communist Partisans whilst many more, including the leader Pavelich and his closest henchmen, escaped with the help of the Vatican to the new world where they kept the Ustasha ideas and ambitions alive and prepared for the day when they could again set out to achieve their goals; and devil take those people whose interests got in their way. That day came in 1990.

Like Hitler before him Tito hated and feared the Serbs and he drew the boundaries of the post war republics so as to make Serbia as small as possible. It was this which first created the problems in Vojvodina and even more so in Kosovo where the Albanians brutally terrorized the Serbs until a reaction to retake control was forced upon Belgrade. We only hear about this reaction, in Croat propaganda, not the far worse Albanian terror which caused it. Worst of all substantial Serbian communities living on lands they had held for hundreds of years found themselves in the new Republic of Croatia. This was tolerable with Federal protection but, when Tudjman took power and declared independence, he also gave clear notice of a re-run of what had happened in 1941/45. The constitution was altered to categorize the Serbs as minorities.

Official measures were taken against them and harassment and violent persecution was started with the evident aim of driving them out. 100,000 Serbs were forced to flee into Serbia proper whilst others erected barricades and formed their own militias to protect themselves against the Croat National Guard and the re-emergent Ustasha. The Tudjman regime committed obscenities such as bringing back the dreaded chequerboard flag, Ustasha slogans and songs and the renaming of streets and squares to glorify the Pavelich regime and fascism. That is what started the civil war and that is what it is all about.

Had the Tudjman regime treated the Serb communities with tact and sensitivity it is possible that the civil war need never have taken place. But those Serb communities which had experienced the genocide were hypersensitive. They knew what was coming. That the regime intended to eliminate them and grab their lands.

The situation has been greatly exacerbated by the attitudes of the European Community. The refusal of the Carrington Committee to admit of the principle of adjusting the boundaries, so as to exclude the majority Serbian communities from Croatian rule and certain oppression, has forced the Serbs to intensify the fight for those lands. The Maastricht meeting and the German dictate that Croatia would be recognized and given more arms - so order so - was the last straw. The Serbs see history repeating itself. They see a German drive into the Balkans, and a repeat of the genocide, with the remainder of the European community kowtowing to the Germans for self-serving reasons, or being bamboozled like Churchill in 1943.

The so-called "Serb domination" of the Federal Army has led to misunderstanding. In fact the Federal Army Officer Corps contained a higher proportion of Slovenian and Croatian officers than were merited. The Federal Army naturally wanted to carry out its duty and maintain the Federation and incidentally its jobs. With their Tito communist training they inclined to brutal measures and reprisals such as long range shelling rather than going in with the bayonet. No doubt the non-Serb Officers saw little reason to risk their lives in close combat whilst some of the Serbian Officers had no reason to spare Croats. General Adzic when a small boy had watched 19 members of his family murdered from his hiding place in a tree. It is all understandable through regrettable - and it is no fault of the Serbian people. They are not the Federation.

It is a travesty of justice that the Serbs have been labeled as aggressors. They had no desire to destroy the Federation although, contrary to Croat propaganda, the system established by Tito actually favored the smaller republics. The Serbs are fierce fighters for a just cause in defense of their lands or their people but they have never been aggressors. The Serbs don't hate. But the Croat history shows that those sections of the Croat population, the ex-communist neo-fascists surrounding Tudjman, the Party of Rights and above all the Ustashi - which regrettably are calling the tune - are grotesquely Serbophobe and driven by hate and by an extraordinary phenomenon - a crusading Catholicism - which I, as a sincere Catholic myself, find totally abhorrent.

I believe that the liquidation of the Yugoslav idea is a tragedy. In the modern market economy era it had everything going for it. I believe that the vast majority of Croats were content and got on well with their Serb neighbors. In declaring their independence the Slovenes were opportunistically jumping on a band wagon expecting to cash in on foreign support.

Foreign encouragement for secession has been fatal. The Maastricht invitation to the smaller republics to destroy the remains of the Federation entirely - although they cannot possibly be viable on their own - invites chaos.

Michael Lees, was one of the British liaison officers dropped by the special forces into Axis-occupied Yugoslavia in 1943. From his unique position inside the war-torn country, and a year spent with the resistance fighters of General Mihailovich, Michael Lees witnessed an inexplicable change in the character of the Allied support: promised to Mihailovich of vital arms and supplies were not kept; scheduled sabotage actions were abruptly canceled by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), Cairo; eventually Mihailovich himself was completely abandoned. In addition to writing *The Rape of Serbia*, Mr. Lees also wrote *Special Operations Executed*, an accounting of his experiences as a special forces officer in the Balkans and Northern Italy during World War II. Along with his wife who also served in SOE they now live in Country Cork, Ireland.

Mr. Warren Stern
Mr. Morris J. Panner
C/O The New York Times
(Response to "Letter to Editor" 2/2/92)
SERBIA & KOSOVO

Gentlemen,

In the Sunday New York Times I read with interest your letter to the editor regarding the Serbians and Kosovo. Even though you visited Kosovo on a human rights mission in 1990, it is apparent that you seem to know little of the Serbian history regarding that region of the world. Kosovo represents the cradle of Serbian history and to the Serbians it is just as important to us as your wailing wall is to you. Kosovo, for more than six centuries was Serbian. And, at the battle of Kosovo in 1389, 100 years before Columbus discovered America, Serbians gave their lives defending their religious belief and this fight for human rights of all Christian people.

To be even more historically correct, at one time Albanians were Eastern Orthodox Christians: However, to be historically current, in 1941, Kosovo had approximately 100,000 Albanian citizens. During the second world war about 350,000 Albanians crossed the border into Yugoslavia in support of Tito and his communist bandits. These Albanians were allowed to remain in Yugoslavia after the war. 45 years later there are now 2 million Albanians in Kosovo. In the past 15 years Yugoslavia has suffered from the same illegal alien problems as we have here in California. Many crossed the border from their own more oppressive country of Albania and a great number are indeed infiltrators intent to incite separatism and to provoke violence, and they have. Some of those who provoked the violence were themselves killed. I am astonished that you condemn the Serbian police for these killings. America can hardly be considered the haven for human rights. Growing up in West Virginia, I have personal experience of the civil and human rights violations in that state and of those in the south during the civil rights demonstrations in the sixties. Do you not remember Kent State or more recently the Rodney King matter here in L.A.? During our own civil war, West Virginia was allowed to remain in the union when others wanted to secede. Our politicians do not feel that these same principles apply to Serbians in Croatia who also voted unanimously to join greater Serbia if Croatia voted to secede!

The Albanians have proven to be violently anti-Christian and contrary to their public statements they do have a desire to join Kosovo with greater Albania. This fact is more than transparent. Surely you two do not support such a concept? Historically, Kosovo was never a part of Albania, regardless of the rhetoric.

At the conclusion of World War II, Tito, in revenge against the Serbians for fighting against him, forbid Serbians to return to their homes, farms and lands which were in Serbian possession for generations. These properties were given to these same Albanians. The Yugoslav government also encouraged the Albanians to stay in Kosovo and payments much like our own welfare system were granted only to these new residents by Tito, singling them out for special treatment. If 500,000 Mexicans were allowed to enter Los Angeles thereby gerrymandering the region, not one politician would stand still for this intrusion, yet Tito did this in 1946 to the Serbians citizens in Kosovo.

Kosovo was made an autonomous region and these new Albanian residents were given their own schools, police, newspapers, radio station, universities teaching in their own language and positions on seats in the government. The Albanians were given more advantage than Serbians citizens who had lived in the region for generations, all due to a dictator's continued oppression of the Serbian people. I find little comfort in your concerns for the Albanians who have only lived in Kosovo for 45 years and were given more advantages than any other ethnic group in all of Yugoslavia. I find it disconcerting that you lack concern for the Serbians who

have suffered grave human rights violations for 45 years including violent attacks. During the past three years more than 100,000 Serbians were forced off their land as thousands of farms were burned and cattle slaughtered. Complaints to the Albanian authorities in Kosovo always brought the same conclusion, farms were burned due to "careless cigarette smoking." When cattle were found with their throats slashed, the police believed that the animal created its own demise by jumping over the wire fence. In my opinion only in fairy tales do cows jump over the moon!

Once in control, the Albanians in Kosovo forbid the teaching of the Serbian language or the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, used by Serbians for centuries, regardless of a Serbian population of more than 250,000. Books on Serbian history and culture were burned. Orthodox churches and cemeteries were desecrated and our Serbian priests were beaten and nuns were raped by Albanian youths. Children were tormented to the point that most were removed from school by their frightened parents.

A favorite Albanian crime was the dowsing of Serbian woman with gasoline, then setting them ablaze. Many died by these violent acts. Hundreds of young Serbian girls were raped in a two year period, no one seemed to care. Not once have I heard a single public outcry for these victims. In the past three years I have been astonished that not one human rights organization, or the United States government, or people like you were concerned for the Serbian minority. Carol Williams, a foreign correspondent in the Balkans for the Los Angeles Times reported the Albanians as saying "we have in the past been very brace and very emotional, now we are learning how to be patient." Are these the acts of a brave and patient people? Instead of gratitude to the Serbian government for taking them in and providing them with advantages, the Albanians will not be happy until every Serbian is out of Kosovo and they have total control, receiving more civil rights than do the Serbians, Greeks, and Bulgarians who are minority citizens there. Tito gave them the region, the Serbia government has a right to resent that illegal act.

When Congressman Lantos of California paid an uninvited visit to Kosovo in 1990, among the human rights violations, he proclaimed he witnessed that the Albanians were not allowed to publicly demonstrate against their government. Yet in the same congressional records it indicates that he spoke before tens of thousands. Not for a moment was I surprised at the outcry from the Serbian press that as an uninvited visitor, no less a Congressman, publicly encouraged the Albanians to civil disobedience and told a crowd of 10,000 that "*the United States Congress is behind you.*" That was a lie! By what right does one congressman have to speak for the entire congress? Or for that fact, the entire United States Government? He was not there in an official governmental capacity! Given these circumstances, would you or any American citizen allow a delegation of Yugoslavs to come to this country and discuss the human rights of the American Indians? Would the American people tolerate a visiting dignitary to induce the black citizens of Harlem to civil disobedience? Would the American people also not be outraged if such a representative were to place a wreath on the graves of the Black Panthers while ignoring our heroic dead? Yet, without one word in the press, Congressman Lantos went to Djakovica and placed a wreath on the graves of killed Albanian criminals, what an insult to those who fought for freedom with their lives in Kosovo in 1389 and in 1941. After leaving Kosovo, Lantos then visited Albania, a country that no other American has been allowed to visit. If Congressman Lantos was so concerned for human rights of the Belkan people why did he not suggest that the American Embassy in Belgrade organize a meeting in the capital of Albania to discuss the disadvantaged Slavs, Greeks and Bulgarians residing in that country under deplorable conditions?

Why would Lantos, a Hungarian Jew, take such an overwhelming position against the Serbs in a dispute that is centuries old? Why would he betray those same Serbs who gave their lives defending his freedom and the freedom of his own people? MONEY! and his all consuming greed of it! It is well established that Congressman Lantos accepts very

generous contributions from the American-Albanian community. It is also obvious that Representative Lantos only represents those in his district with whom he agrees or who support him financially. To what depth has the word freedom been made to sink and in whose benefit do the two of you work so diligently?

How could the Serbian minority in Kosovo with less than 250,000 (estimated now at 100,000) possibly overrun 2,200,000 Albanians, that makes no sense. And why have 125,000 Serbians fled in the opposite direction if the Serbians are perpetrating such oppression. If the Albanians have it so bad, why have they not fled? Are you really that naïve? You bemoan the fact that thousands of Albanians lost their jobs, yet not even a whimper from you for the thousands of Serbian doctors, lawyers, teachers, judges and police who lost their jobs in Kosovo over the past several years, or the thousands of Serbians who lost their jobs in Croatia last year. Along with the formation of an "*ethnically pure state*," in Croatia our politicians have been equally silent. Your lack of outrage on these issues is appalling. By what measure of decency, fairness and equality do you, as lawyers consider "*justice for all*?"

When Senator Dole visited the region last year on what was billed as a SECRET HUMAN RIGHTS MISSION in the same paragraph of the congressional record he said "*thousands of Albanians ran through the fields waving at our bus*," obviously it was not a very secret mission. In what was indicated as a meeting to hear both sides of the dispute in Kosovo, Senator Dole granted priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church 20 minutes of his time, 5 minutes for picture taking which was obviously for the Senator's benefit, not peace making. The Senator then met with the Albanians for more than two hours. When one of the Orthodox clergy told the Senator that he was personally beaten by Albanian youth, his shoulder and arm broken, the Senator replied "*that is your problem*." When the clergy told the senator about the hundreds of rapes to Serbian nun and young girls of Kosovo the Senator said "*there is no proof of these acts*." When the priests complained that our Holy Shrines, churches and monasteries, world architectural treasures, dating back to the 11th century were being defiled and desecrated, the Senator had no response. However, this same Senator Dole is now quite vocal about the destruction of Roman churches being destroyed in Croatia. Croatia, in 1941 had 1,100 Serbian Orthodox Churches and 2 million Serbian Orthodox Christians. Hundreds of thousands of Serbians were burned alive in those churches. Today in Croatia there are less than 400,000 Serbians and 25 churches many of these too have been destroyed. The difference in this war is that Roman Catholic Churches are being destroyed EMPTY!

One hour before Senator Dole's "*secret*" bus arrived at the hotel in Pristina that day, a "*spontaneous*" demonstration broke out in front of the hotel. In the force used by the Serbian police to break up the demonstration, an Albanian youth was beaten. One hour later, 8"x10" photographic prints were presented to Senator Dole as proof of police brutality. Do you not for a moment find such evidence only highly suspicious but wonder how such a poor region of the world can out perform our own news media in such a timely fashion?

I am enclosing a brochure, Serbian Genocide 1941-45, which I produced for the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America last October as we prepared to commemorate the 50th anniversary of our holocaust. You will note this material has been written by non-Serbian and non-ethnic experts on Balkans history and politics. You will also note that representation was made by the Jewish community who also suffered in Yugoslavia during that period.

By taking exception to your letter in the New York Times, I do so only because you and others like you have taken such a one sided position. Not only with Kosovo, but with the current civil war. All with total disregard to history and the borders that were established in 1918 when Yugoslavia was formed. You may not be prepared for the conclusions but, we are facing yet another Palestine or Ireland in this conflict.

I find it difficult to comprehend that today the world accepts the fact that the Baltic states are allowed to resume, after seventy years of Russian dictatorship using borders that existed prior to Russian domination. Yet, Kosovo and Croatian borders that were expanded illegally in 1941 by another dictator are somehow up for negotiation. If these are the rules by which the Albanians and the Croats are allowed to play, I would encourage the Serbian army to take as much real estate as possible and under whatever force necessary.

I would also regard the replacement of the Croatia borders back to their 1991 limits under one of three circumstances, (1) when the Golan Heights is returned to Palestine, (2) when Cyprus is given back to the Greeks or (3) when hell freezes over. With regard to Kosovo the Serbian government is totally and legally entitled to rescind that autonomous territory.

The British historian Temperley once wrote

"There is no race which has shown a more heroic desire for freedom than the Serbs, or achieved it with less aid from others or at more sacrifice to itself."

In light of the preceding passage I suggest that, if you can not support equal rights for all the people of Yugoslavia and recognition of legitimate borders, established by previous legal documents, then keep your opinions to yourself. I add to that **Never Again!**

Very truly yours,

Bill Dorich, President

Mr. Tom Plate
The Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA

Dear Mr. Plate,

Thank you for your response to my letter of November 22, 1991. I have paid particular attention to the coverage by the Los Angeles Times with regard to the civil war in Yugoslavia and in particular the vengeful, and vindictive tone with which Ms. Williams seems to report the Serbian side of this war. Does she have a vested interest or a bias in the outcome of this crisis or is she just full of hate for 25 million Serbian people?

Her articles seems to take exception to everything and anything done by the Serbian side, wiith total and sometime reckless disregard for truth or balance. The solution to the Yugoslav war would be a simple one if indeed, it was as one sided as she implies.

I find it ironic that the Croatian atrocities reported in Saturday's (1/25/92) issue of the New York Times was not forthcoming from the poison pen of Carol Williams. (copy of the New York Times article enclosed) The Sunday, Los Angeles Times however did have a foreign service report which dedicated one paragraph to this same massacre. There seems to be no value placed on Serbian lives lost in this war, even when exterminated in this horrifying fashion. Ironic that these were the very atrocities the Serbians feared most and warned the west against. I also find it no less disconcerting that when UNICEF reported on December 5, 1991 that Croatian officials banned 4,000 women and children from leaving Dubrovnik because the Croatian army was using these unwilling victims as shields. Staffan de Mistura of UNICEF characterized the decision by the all-male Dubrovnik crisis committee as cowardly and cynical. This information was never mentioned by Ms. Williams. Numerous American Croats have been arrested for shipping illegal arms to Croatia, the latest was in Florida where a man was trying to smuggle \$12 million in weapons. I did not read this information in the Los Angeles Times, nor did I discover that American Croats have hired Ruder & Finn, a Public Relations firm to conduct pro-Croatian media, funded by the Catholic Church. Her actions would suggest that perhaps Ms. Williams has Roman Catholic ties!

In September when Dusan Markovich was killed, his body with more than seventy burn marks and multiple stab wounds was shown on Zagreb and German television as an example of Serbian atrocities against the Croats. Dusan Markovich however, is Serbian. Tapes of Dusan Markovich, narrated by actor Martin Sheen were then forwarded to our Congressmen and Senators by the Croatian Public Relations firm to persuade votes. I am enclosing a copy of a photograph containing Dusan Markovich.

Last November, the medical staff of the University of Belgrade, with the aid of more than 5,000 volunteers, opened 3 of the estimated 45 limestone pits in Croatia, where Serbians were killed. These pits were covered over with cement by the Tito government in an attempt to maintain "*brotherly love*" and "*forgiveness*." However, for years, Serbians were forbidden to discuss the war or to place lighted candles on these sites. Serbians have always considered the cemented-over pits as nothing short of Tito's (a Croat himself) effort to conceal the brutal atrocities. In November, the skulls of more than 55,000 victims were found. An astonishing quantity in view of the past 50 years of Croatian insistence that during the war, "*only a few thousand victims were thrown into pits*." I wonder how many skulls would be found if the remaining 42 pits were opened? I have a video of these excavations if your are interested in seeing truth! Why did Ms. Williams withhold this information from the American people?

I have resigned myself to realizing that, for whatever reason, the Los Angeles Times has taken a position to only report a Croatian point of view on this war. This war has also convinced me of how naive I was in believing that a free press still exists in America. A story of a paid informant in the Clinton story today demonstrates the quality of your industry. As a first generation American-Serb I was taught that a free press was intended to inform not advocate! The Times has chosen to advocate on many issues, including Croatia. It is obvious that these current human rights violations in Gospic are not newsworthy by the same standards of fairness and decency as those of the New York Times, **your silence speaks very loudly!** Your reckless disregard for a Croatian constitution which only allows Croats participation and your lack of reporting the government abuses to its Serbian citizens along with the Croatian officials who

publicly make anti-Serbian and anti-Jewish remarks, places the Times in a position of moral judge on what the American public have a right to know. Mr. Plate, Serbians as well as Americans died defending your right to freedom and a free press, you and the Times desecrate their memories and their sacrifice. I wonder, in whose benefit do YOU and others LIKE YOU work so diligently?

Serbians in Gaspic have complained since September that more than 150 of their family members, relatives and neighbors have disappeared, some abducted by masked Croatian gunmen. This massacre accounts for only 25 victims. Perhaps someday we will find the remaining 125 missing Gaspic villagers at the bottom of a pit? If Croatian authorities and foreign diplomats as well as the Serbians here in Los Angeles knew this information for the past five months, obviously, Ms. Williams had this same information at her disposal, yet even with proof of these atrocities released by the Helsinki Watch this week, Ms. Williams and the Times have chosen silence. Carol Williams's bias and irresponsible position is like that taken by journalist in 1941 who ignored reported atrocities awaiting confirmation. They waited for four years until 1,500,000 Serbian and 60,000 Jewish lives were lost before western journalist, like her, started to write about the killings. In 1941, 288 Serbian Orthodox Clergy and 4 Bishops were exterminated as the Serbian people begged the world to listen.

In 1992 the world's and your silence on Serbia is simply astonishing. Germany's hands are covered in Serbian blood yet the media treats them as trustworthy. Just as the Ustashi in Croatia, the Stashi in Germany has an equally disgusting past.

As the JFK film currently dramatizes the irresponsibility of the press in the Kennedy assassination, in years to come the Los Angeles Times will be held accountable for its lack of responsibility in this war and the price the Serbian people paid with their lives for your manipulation of the truth and your silence. This past fall when the Jewish community of Los Angeles commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust, the Times was there and gave them front page coverage. The Times gave coverage to the Russians on their losses. However, when 12 Serbian parishes in 4 western states held its commemoration of the Holocaust on October 1st here in Los Angeles, the Times declined our invitation.

It has been brought to my attention that a protest letter written to the Los Angeles Times from Blasko Paraklis, our Diocesan Secretary and assistant to The Serbian Bishop, was given to Croatian militants by a member of your staff. Mr. Paraklis has been telephoned and bothered by Croatian individuals receiving a copy of his letter. I find the behavior by your staff repugnant, outrageous, dangerous, and a serious violation of civil rights. However, the behavior by your staff is a clear indication why there is no balanced opinion in your paper regarding the Yugoslav matter. I also find the current situation worthy of a quote by Avro Manhattan from his book, *Vatican Imperialism in the Twentieth Century* when he wrote, "*to what depth has the word freedom been made to sink?*" The entire Serbian community in Los Angeles he aware of what the Times staff did with the Paraklis letter, short of an open letter of apology to the Serbian community, the Los Angeles Times certainly owes Mr. Paraklis a public apology.

Sincerely,

Bill Dorich
CC: Mr. David Leventhal, Publisher
New York Times
The Washington Post
Wiesenthal Holocaust Center
CNN