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FAX COVER PAGE

DATE: May 28, 1992 FAX: 202 225 4131
TO: The Honorable Helen Schuler COMPANY: U.S. House of Rep.
FROM: Chas. & Coffman Robert R. Rabinowitz COMPANY: FCI

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Embassy of the United States of America

Belgrade
May 28, 1992

The Honorable Helen Delich Bentley
U.S. House of Representatives
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

BY FAX

Dear Congresswoman Bentley:

As I promised, I am writing to let you know what we were able to find out about the several issues you raised with me yesterday in Belgrade before you left. First, however, you should know that your efforts on Shayna Gluck Lazarevich's behalf are having a dramatic and positive effect. Today's Politika devoted nearly a full page to very sympathetic reporting on Shayna's struggle to get her children back, including coverage (with a photo of you and Shayna together) of your press conference in support of her. We also understand that President Milosevic has agreed to receive Shayna, a first.

You shared with me reports you had heard of Serbs in some communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina obeying orders to disarm, and then being ordered to leave their homes. One town you mentioned, Novi Grad, was several weeks ago reported to be the site of heavy fighting, with the Belgrade press reporting stories of civilian Serbs murdered and other serious abuses in that area. We have seen no substantiation of those charges, but we take them seriously, particularly in light of the fact that we have verified that some 600 ethnic Serbs are being held hostage by Croatian forces in the same Odzak district, reportedly to be used as barter to obtain the release of Croats being held in Bosanski Samac. We have raised with the Croatian authorities the situation of Serbs in Odzak, and in Livno as well, where we have been told that more than 60 Serbs are imprisoned and several hundred families are being prevented from leaving.

With the International Committee of the Red Cross, the EC monitors, and other international groups having suspended their operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the time being, it is very difficult to investigate or confirm the burgeoning charges of humanitarian abuses which are being made, many of which are undoubtedly based on fact. We are also concerned that in some areas the pressure on Serb residents to abandon their homes and resettle elsewhere is coming from other Serbs who are seeking to redraw the ethnic map of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such population transfers, even if ostensibly "voluntary," are a disastrous substitute for the dialogue and human rights guarantees which, I am convinced, offer the only method of obtaining a lasting peace.

You also shared with us a copy of a document alleging to show the transfer of funds from a German bank to defense forces in Brcko. While we are not in a position to judge whether the document is a genuine one or not, it is no secret that many Yugoslav "guest workers" in Germany from Bosnia-Herzegovina have remitted funds to their hometowns in support of the whole panoply of political parties and armed groups. There is no evidence at all, however, to indicate that the German government is involved in providing financial or other support to any group in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Like the U.S., Germany is a humanitarian aid donor in Bosnia-Herzegovina, channelling its aid primarily through multilateral and international organizations.

The rumor that there are "sixty Ustasha" among U.N. peacekeeping troops is one that has been printed in some of the more sensationalist Belgrade publications. UNPROFOR has rejected such allegations, pointing out that it is satisfied that the countries providing peacekeeping troops have included only loyal citizens of their respective countries. UNPROFOR is emphatic that this includes those soldiers who have Croatian ethnic backgrounds. We are inquiring at UNPROFOR about the charge you heard that a Serbian woman in Baranja was raped by a member of UNPROFOR.

I trust you have received the CSCE report on the May 31 elections which I sent you yesterday. The full text of the report was printed in today's Borba, and excerpted in Politika. We have confirmed that a copy has been sent through CSCE channels to President Milosevic.

I believe the speech by Croatian President Tudjman you mentioned must be the one he gave on May 24 in Zagreb. Although we were unable to find a reference to western Herzegovina in that speech precisely along the lines you described, Tudjman did discuss Bosnia-Herzegovina in the following fashion:


"They (the enemy) spread lies saying that I sold eastern Slavonia for Herzegovina. Not only did I not sell it, we were preparing to defend every foot of Croatian land. We have sided with the Croatian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well, and defended them there as well. We won the defensive war in Croatia through the unity of Croats at home and in the diaspora. When I say the Croats at home, I also mean Croats in parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, because many fighters from Herzegovina-Bosnia fought in our units. And when the Serbian army threatened Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was those people from Bosnia-Herzegovina who had fought in Croatian combat units, these volunteers went there and served as the core of the formation of Croatian defense forces, who defended not only Croatian areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but were also a buttress for the defense of the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

While the language is a bit contorted, it does not seem to express an intention to "keep" Herzegovina or partition Bosnia-Herzegovina. If your tape indicates otherwise, please let me know.

I hope I have addressed satisfactorily in this letter the issues you raised with me yesterday, and that you will not hesitate to let me know if you would like further information. I have asked Richard Johnson at the State Department to provide you with material on the FRY constitution.

As always, you had an extraordinary schedule in Belgrade and accomplished a great deal in a short time. I especially appreciate your efforts on behalf of democracy in Serbia and your extraordinary commitment to helping Shayna. I look forward to staying in close touch.

Sincerely,


Robert Rackmales
Charge d'Affaires



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REGIONAL MANAGER, MID ATLANTIC

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 May 29, 1992

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Sincerely yours,

Peter Djordjevic
Peter Djordjevic

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