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SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
EUROPEAN SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS BOSNIA
FEBRUARY 18, 1993

Statement by George Kenney
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your kind invitation to appear before this Subcommittee. I applaud your efforts to use this and other hearings to help forge a consensus among the American people that the war in the former Yugoslavia directly threatens American interests, and that we should do something about it, without delay.

We are, I believe, faced with a difficult political paradox. The crisis in the former Yugoslavia will continue to deteriorate dramatically unless the West intervenes; for their part, western publics, by and large, feel strongly that something--whatever that something may be--must be done to arrest the crumbling away of the underpinnings of civilization in Europe. Yet too many politicians continue to think that political costs of an effective intervention outweigh its benefits. As often happens, governments underestimate the intelligence of their own publics.

It may well be that western governments will not act until they feel tangible pain from inaction. By then it may well be too late. Indeed, I foresee our mistakes setting the stage for an entire future generation of diplomats and politicians who will strive to cope with collapsed European security arrangements, just as we took a generation to recover from our failure to halt the

spread of Communism in Eastern Europe after the Second World War.

I would submit to you that we have arrived at a turning point in world history. Serbian aggression in the former Yugoslavia is an uncompromising test of our will to support freedom, democracy, and civil and human rights in Europe. If we cannot stand up for these principles in the former Yugoslavia, it is difficult to say that we are truly prepared to defend them elsewhere in Europe. The danger is that again Europe may embark on its unfinished agenda of the politics of race.

Because of that peculiar European disease, America has been involved in two world wars. Western democracies have had a lot of unpleasant experience with unchecked nationalism; by now we know what it is. Serbia under Milosevic is no different than Germany under Hitler, except that Serbia is smaller. We know, or ought to know, that appeasement of Milosevic--indeed, what is even worse, capitulation under direct attack--will not remove his threat to our security.

Moreover, Milosevic, so far, so totally outsmarts the outside world that it is fair to say through the example he sets in the former Yugoslavia he shapes most of the critical elements of the United Nations' role in the post-communist world. He is turning the United Nations--and other international organizations, which all could show such promise after the Cold War--into hollow bodies strongly reminiscent of the old, ineffective League of Nations.

Over the long run, this crisis demonstrates that the world desperately needs institutions which can handle high-intensity

regional conflict, particularly when it involves Europe. The UN and NATO, as now constituted, cannot do the job. But over the short run, we cannot afford to wait for radical reforms of existing institutions or the creation of new ones. Unfortunately, European powers are not going to act on their own and it is no good pretending to expect leadership from them. America has only one choice: We must keep Europe from falling apart in spite of itself. America, I believe, can and must lead the way to a new world order, starting in Europe.

I will not review for you all the policy issues. The stakes are reasonably clear, so should be our goals, if we remain true to our often articulated values, and so are the means to achieve those goals, although reasonable people may differ over what might work best.

But I want to emphasize again the importance of political consensus. With help from elected officials farsighted enough to understand the seriousness of this crisis--I mean especially in the Congress--I believe we in America can reach a political consensus to act which will at least help frame the choices for the Clinton administration. Public groups should mobilize. The public debate should resonate more widely. We face an interesting test of ourselves as individuals, of our conscience and our collective power. We may make history.

The Other Clinton Test: Intervention in Bosnia

By GEORGE KENNEY

Many people wrongly tell President Clinton that Bosnia would ruin his presidency if he were to initiate military intervention for political ends, just as Vietnam ruined Lyndon Johnson's. According to that view, no matter how horrible the war in the former Yugoslavia becomes, it will remain confined to the Balkan region. No U.S. interests are at stake. Not a single American life should be sacrificed for Balkan peace. If we intervene anyway, the costs are prohibitively high. So there is no alternative to a negotiated settlement.

Yes, Bosnia could indeed ruin Mr. Clinton's presidency. But it is far more likely to do so if Mr. Clinton does not rise to the challenge and exercise leadership on the world stage. So far, he is off to a mixed start. On the positive side, he and Secretary of State Warren Christopher have clearly identified most of the stakes—that is far more than Mr. Bush and Mr. Baker ever did. On the negative side, he does not have even the semblance of a plan. He has given us "Bush-plus." Mr. Clinton will make negotiations his main priority yet he is not prepared to use force to back them up. Thus he continues to leave the initiative to Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic.

The U.S. should be concerned to try to resolve this crisis now. Much is at stake apart from worthy humanitarian concerns. The war threatens the survival of multilateral security arrangements, perhaps world peace. If the war spins out of control into the wider region—and soon it will without U.S. leadership to manage it—the disease of nationalism will spread throughout the continent. European coun-

tries will discover that they have to fend for themselves as Europe returns to the politics of race. We experienced that phenomenon in two world wars; we would be foolish to allow history to repeat itself again. Especially so, when a breakdown of multilateral systems would also facilitate the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the technology to make them. It is not outlandish to think that Mr. Milosevic could one day acquire weapons of mass destruction.

The West has tended to seriously underestimate another issue at stake, namely that citizens of Islamic countries are enraged by the Western failure to stop Serbian aggression directed primarily at Muslims. Many in the Islamic world are quick to point out the double standard when the West bombs Saddam Hussein but ignores Bosnia's plight. On a pragmatic level that may mean an end to the cooperation of Mideast states regarding Iraq. In turn, that could jeopardize our energy security.

Unfortunately, the Vance-Owen plan, the only plan under serious discussion now, is likely to result in an unmitigated disaster. Its most significant aspect is its abolition of the Bosnian government, to be replaced with a council of nine—three Croat, three Serb, three Muslim—having a rotating presidency under some form of United Nations supervision. In this arrangement, Bosnia would be but a short step from having the war criminal Radovan Karadzic as president! We have been fortunate up to now to have had moderate Bosnian leaders whom we could help; without them, it would be infinitely more difficult to assist the victims of Serbian aggression.

To beat a plan, you need a plan. One reason Mr. Clinton has had trouble coming up with one is that he has relied heavily for his "complete policy review" on the people who produced Mr. Bush's approach. These officials—at the National Security Council, the State Department and the Pentagon—are churning out the same paper, with the same recommendations. At State, in particular, career diplomats have tended to exaggerate the difficulty of getting European allies to back stronger action.

The European powers must have our help, and they know it. Mr. Clinton's first task should be to tell them in ringing terms that Serbian thuggery is a threat we cannot ignore, and the U.S. will engage in a solution, but only on our terms—which include the use of force to confront Serbia—or Europe will have to go it alone.

We should try to get the U.N. or NATO to approve intervention, but if they won't we must form an ad hoc coalition around American leadership, including allies outside Europe. Our strategic goals should be simple: Roll back Serbian forces in Bosnia and Croatia; recognize Macedonia and provide economic and security assistance; and be prepared to contain Serbian aggression indefinitely, while pressing strongly for democracy and human rights in Kosovo.

To do this we should arm the Bosnians, use air strikes against Serbian positions in Bosnia, give Croatia support to oust Serbian occupiers, and send limited Western forces (no more than 50,000) for missions such as lifting the siege of Sarajevo, liberating concentration camps and sealing off Serbian resupply. We must be

ready to attack centers of gravity within Serbia if the operation escalates to war. This is a moderately difficult and possibly costly operation that we could be assured of winning.

To undertake any effort in Bosnia—diplomatic or military—Mr. Clinton could do worse than turn to the Congress for help. A surprising bipartisan consensus is emerging that the U.S. should uphold fundamental principles in the Yugoslav war, despite the cost. Several resolutions are circulating in the House and the Senate calling for intervention. It is possible that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will introduce a resolution authorizing the use of force, just as it did before the Gulf War.

Politically, American calculations may be more Byzantine than the Balkans. Critics of intervention claim the American people would never support it: They wouldn't understand or wouldn't care. And intervention could not work without a strong consensus behind it.

The last statement is true. But such critics may go too far in second-guessing the public. Some opinion polls show that an unusually large proportion of Americans are concerned and informed and would support stronger action. This journalist, in an unscientific survey of thousands of people across the nation, has found a majority favoring intervention. Indeed a favorable climate likely exists for the president to lead the way in shaping a consensus to act. Over the next several weeks we shall see whether Mr. Clinton has what it takes to be a world leader.

Mr. Kenney is a consultant to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He resigned as Yugoslav desk officer at the State Department in August 1992, to protest the Bush administration's policies.

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