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April 9, 1993

Mr. Steve Weisman  
Foreign Desk  
The New York Times  
229 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Weisman:

It was truly heartening to read The New York Times article, "Meddling in the Balkans: A Peril of the Ages" (Sunday, April 11, 1993). Finally, mention was made about some of the reasons the Serbs are fighting, and the implications of the historical background, so important to understanding the Balkans, were given. Thank you.

Over the past several months, before The New York Times' Sunday article, I had become increasingly concerned regarding the western media's one-sided portrayal of Yugoslavia's civil war as a case of Serbian aggression against Muslim neighbors. There are, very definitely, two sides to this tragic war. To ignore the Serbian side betrays a people who have been America's most loyal allies in the Balkans throughout this century, and forever dims the hope of achieving lasting peace in former Yugoslavia.

Enclosed you will find a packet of documents that I have compiled. Although somewhat lengthy, they constitute, in my opinion, the "other side" of the story. I ask you to take some time to review these documents, all from respected sources which you can easily verify independently. In reviewing them, please consider the following:

1. The Yugoslav civil war should not be viewed as one of pure Serbian aggression. Bosnian Serbs, comprising one-third of the population, have lived on 65% of that land for centuries. They are, for the most part, not grabbing Muslim lands, but rather defending their own homes. This fact is almost never pointed out in the U.S. media, including your paper.
2. The Serbs' tainted image comes, in large part, from early reports of atrocities allegedly committed by them. The United Nations has since proven that many so-called Serbian massacres, including the late spring shooting of civilians in a Sarajevo bread line, actually were perpetrated by Muslims against their own people to gain western sympathy. But only a handful of the U.S. media--not The New York Times--reported the UN findings.
3. In the February 7, 1993 New York Times issue, the headline reads, "Serbs Expel 4,000 from Bosnian Town." The intercepted official document I have enclosed, however, instructs Muslims to leave Trebinje at the order of the Muslim-Bosnian government. This letter makes me wonder what really is happening there...what is the real story?

4. There were no allegations of mass rape until the Serbian Patriarch Pavle released a list of 800 Serbian women raped in Bosnia (see enclosed list). Within 36 hours Bosnia's President Izetbegovic claimed, with no documentation, that over 50,000 Muslim women had been raped by Bosnian-Serbian (always incorrectly labeled Serbian) forces. That figure volley-balled between 20,000 and 80,000 without any documentation of any kind other than the word of the same handful of Muslim women. The child shown on television purportedly born out of the rape attacks on January 6 was at least four months old. The unfortunate war in Bosnia began in April! Yet The New York Times continue to refer to mass rape when the figures are highly suspect and none of the rape accounts have been verified? Where is the documentation, if there is any, of these thousands of rapes?
5. Both the House of Representatives Task Force on Terrorism and Defense and Foreign Affairs report that the Bosnian-Muslim government and its Croatian allies have been, and are being, armed illegally by Germany, Austria, and Hungary, despite the arms embargo. This is never discussed in the U.S. media.
6. According to the Task Force on Terrorism, the Bosnian-Muslim government has close ties to fundamentalist groups in Iran and have as their goal the establishment of an Islamic fundamentalist state in Europe. Please note President Izetbegovic's publication, The Islamic Declaration.
7. Why is it not stated that Bosnian-Serb women and children are blocking the convoys in Srebrenica in order to protest the holding of Bosnian-Serbs in Tuzla against their will by Muslim forces?
8. We keep hearing--please read in one or two of the enclosed--that nuclear components are being funneled to Iran and Iraq via Croatia and Italy. Nothing, again, is seen in the U.S. media about this.
9. We keep reading about the Serbs' desire for a Greater Serbia, but a Greater Croatia has been established already with the takeover of Western Hercegovina. About 50,000 troops are stationed there, the Croatian flag is flying, and Croatian currency is used, but outside of one mention of Greater Croatia in the Washington Post, everybody appears to accept it as a fait accompli.

Indeed, truth has been one of the principle victims of this war. The media bias against the Serbs on all issues has helped foster the one-sided sanctions and the subsequent increase of Serbian resentment against the western world. The sanctions not only have strengthened President Milosevic, but also have bolstered and expanded criminal profiteers, while decimating and starving the civilian population and the 640,000 refugees they are hosting.

If there is to be peace in the Balkans, these points I have raised must be considered and investigated. Please be in contact with me to discuss your reaction to my thoughts. Let's get all sides of the story out...and let the world know about the entire gloomy outlook. Let's

pray for peace.

Sincerely,

Helen Delich Bentley  
Member of Congress

HDB:ab