

'We have a moral obligation to save Bosnia's children'

The Schiller Institute and Georgetown University's Center for Peace Studies jointly sponsored a press conference on Feb. 20, calling for a "Marshall Plan" to save the children of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The press conference, held at the National Press Club, was addressed by Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp LaRouche; Dr. Jozef Miklosko, who was the first vice prime minister in post-communist Czecho-Slovakia; and former U.S. Congressman John Dow (D-N.Y.). A statement was read on behalf of Father Richard T. McSorley, S.J., director of the Center for Peace Studies, and greetings were sent by former Congressman Frank McCloskey, both of whom were unable to attend. The speakers stressed the moral imperative for a Marshall Plan-style reconstruction of the country, to save the children of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the genocidal conditions of war, and the equally genocidal conditionalities now being imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Father McSorley's brief statement recalled his four years as one of 2,500 American POWs of the Japanese in the Philippines during World War II. He compared the depravity of the IMF, which would impose brutal austerity and debt collection on Bosnia, to the moral depravity of one of the American POWs, who sold chocolate bars for \$85 to other, starving prisoners. Father McSorley called on the international community to condemn the IMF for this "crime against humanity."

Dr. Jozef Miklosko, who has been travelling across the United States, warned that a new bloody conflict can come quickly unless there is a change in policy on the part of the nations which stood by and tolerated genocide. Dr. Miklosko also called for the cancellation of Bosnia's foreign debt, referring to the call of Pope John Paul II for a Jubilee in preparation for the new millennium.

Former Congressman Dow condemned IMF and World Bank policies and their "atrocious" attempt to "wring payments" out of the hellish situation in Bosnia.

Endorsers of the coalition's call include Italian member of parliament Roberto Formigoni; Dr. Marijan Brajinovic,

president of the Austrian-Croatian Society, Vienna; former U.S. Congressmen Clare Callan (D-Neb.) and Jeffery Cohelan (D-Calif.); Chor-Bishop Elias El-Hayek, Maronite Diocese of Canada; and Msgr. Robert P. Hupp, Director Emeritus of Boys Town, Nebraska.

Statement by Helga Zepp LaRouche

I have issued this call to save the children of Bosnia. Why do I focus on the question of the children, and not on Bosnia in general?

I hope that if there's any morality left in the West at all, that maybe the horrible condition of the children will evoke that remaining humanity which is necessary to turn an intolerable situation around. I hope that how we treat the children of Bosnia, will be the way we treat our own future—that is, if we are to have one.

For four years, Western governments have tolerated genocide; and, from a standpoint of natural law and international law, these governments by condoning something which has been clearly established as in violation of international laws, have already lost the legitimacy of power, from a higher standpoint. Now, there is the true danger that to the atrocities which have already been committed, more horrible ones will be added, implying the immediate danger that a new phase of the war could potentially erupt.

What is the situation on the ground?

After four years of war of aggression against Bosnia, 90% of the roads, railways, telecommunications systems, gas, and water pipelines, power stations, and other such crucial ingredients of infrastructure have been destroyed. Whatever remains of the State-sector industry, only 10% is right now in a position to produce. Fifty percent of all homes of the people have been destroyed; 90% of all mosques; nearly all libraries,

museums, and theaters. Ninety percent of all people are unemployed.

Half of the population of Bosnia has been killed or displaced, or turned into refugees in this war. And one has to see the situation of the children in this general economic context. Because one not only has to consider the children who were killed, but many of these children who have lived through this atrocity, have lost one parent or two parents; they had to watch the horrible experiences of their fathers being mutilated, their mothers being raped. They have been through bomb terror, sniper terror, for four years. And many of those are traumatized, and urgently need a perspective—a hope—which, under the present non-existing economic perspective cannot exist.

World Bank blackmail

Now, the problem is that the World Bank and the European Commission have forced the Bosnian government to accept the old debt of Yugoslavia as a precondition for any new loans. After the two-day conference on the reconstruction of Bosnia, which was formally a part of the Dayton Agreement, the foreign minister, [Muhammed] Sacirbey, basically called the policy of the European Union and the West in general towards Bosnia treason.

Now, why is this a legitimate way to talk about this?

The Bosnian government has estimated—and this is a very conservative estimate—that the damage caused by the war is, at minimum, \$47 billion. The World Bank decided to allocate \$518 million for the immediate future for reconstruction purposes in the next three months, and \$5.1 billion total. That's about 10% of the conservative estimate of the Bosnian government. But that's not its worst aspect.

The worst thing is the conditionalities which have been attached. The victim of the genocide—the Bosnian government—has to agree to take over the debt of the aggressor, of former Yugoslavia. *So they have to finance the debt of the war machine which nearly destroyed half of their population, committed genocide, mass rape;* I mean, this is just a scandal beyond belief.

The World Bank conditionalities also say that the Bosnians must abandon any defense of the Bosnian currency. It also says that, basically, there must be no restriction on privatization programs of the remaining economy, an economy which has been 80% destroyed. And we have seen what similar privatizations have done in Russia, and in the East in general.

It also demands limiting the use of funds for domestic purposes, which means that the funds available are supposed to be used to pay the foreign debt of former Yugoslavia. It also has a clause limiting the use of "scarce resources" to help the poor, because "a bloated social assistance budget would undermine fiscal prudence needed for long-term stability."

Now, these formulations are *absolutely cynical*. I mean, you cannot talk about the poor, the whole country is poor, and to talk about "bloated social assistance" at a point where the

whole country is lying on the ground, is just beyond imagination.

The World Bank also demands that the head of the Central Bank not be a Bosnian, which is a complete violation of the right to national sovereignty of this country. This also constitutes cynicism beyond belief. Enver Boskovic, the vice president of the Bosnian Central Bank, in November had said that Bosnia needs an immediate minimum of \$10-12 billion right away, to begin the postwar reconstruction.

A new Marshall Plan is needed

Now, the Schiller Institute calls on all international aid organizations which have been involved in trying to help Bosnia; because presently, the humanitarian aid, as important as it is, is only a drop in the bucket; and I'm appealing to the international aid organizations to become a lobby to demand a *real reconstruction program*, not just what is going on right now. I'm appealing, also, to the churches, the trade unions, and especially the governments, to agree on a change of policy towards Bosnia; to agree on a kind of Marshall Plan for reconstruction, in a way similar to what was done in the postwar period in Germany. Basically, I'm calling upon all of these organizations to form a lobby to put pressure on the governments, to reverse their course.

What we need, is an integrated infrastructure program. We have prepared press packages which detail the kinds of immediate infrastructure measures which are the absolute precondition for any development of the economy or agriculture. We demand that the Bosnian government be given the right to have their own sovereign national bank under Bosnian sovereignty, to help the financing of the reconstruction program.

The Dayton Agreement was, in our view, a necessary step, and I agree with President [Alija] Izetbegovic, who said that this Dayton Agreement, even though it does not constitute a just peace, was better than the continuation of the war. The problem is, however, that especially with the injustices of the Dayton Agreement, which forces the victim to sit at one table with the aggressor, this cannot hold. And I see a great danger that this situation can explode.

We are in contact with many people on the ground in Bosnia, in Croatia, and, from the standpoint of the population, the mandate of the IFOR troops does not look much different than the Unprofor. In other words, they do not see a change in their horrible economic plight; and they regard that President Clinton, being well-meaning and being well aware, did try to end the war. But they see the IFOR troops as just one other occupation troop; and the desperation of the population can lead to horrible things, and I think that if this is not changed, dramatically and rapidly, that this remains one of the Achilles' heels for the Clinton Presidency in the coming year.

Therefore, I think it is a question of living up to our moral responsibility of trying to undo at least some of the horrible crimes that the West has loaded on its own shoulders in trying to now change the policy, and save the children of Bosnia.