

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

DEMOCRACY IN CROATIA?

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 16, 1998

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to share with my colleagues an informative newspaper article revealing the unfortunate lack of progress towards democratic and human rights in Croatia (documented recently in the State Department's Country Report). I also want to express my deep sympathy and support for the citizens of this Republic who voted for democracy nearly eight years ago. The people of Croatia were right in wanting to join other democratic nations by implementing democratic reforms that would bring them more freedom and better lives for their families. It is unfortunate, that the ruling party and its leader, President Tudjman, maintain an authoritarian grip that stifles these dreams. One has only to look at Croatia's neighbor, Slovenia, to see how different it could have been had Croatia's leaders embraced democracy instead of holding on to the past and their personal power at the expense of the people of Croatia.

At this point, I include the text of a bill I recently introduced on this matter, H. Res. 375.

[From the New York Times, Feb. 15, 1998]

THREATS WORRY 3 WHO TIED CROATIAN ARMY TO ATROCITIES

(By Chris Hedges)

ZAGREB, CROATIA, FEB. 14.—Three former Croatian soldiers who provided testimony and documents detailing the killing of scores of ethnic Serbs and Croats by the Croatian Army say they have been repeatedly beaten by unidentified assailants, their vehicles have been firebombed and they receive almost daily death threats.

The men, who gave their evidence to the war crimes tribunal at The Hague, say they witnessed scores of abductions and killings in and around the town of Gospic during Croatia's 1991 war of independence from Yugoslavia.

They say that hundreds of ethnic Serbs, as well as Croats who opposed the nationalist movement, were executed and buried in mass graves around Gospic by the Croatian Army, paramilitary groups and the police.

They also contend that documents they have turned over to The Hague implicate senior Croatian officials, including Defense Minister Gojko Susak, in the killings. The Croatian Government denies that its senior officials were involved in human rights abuses during the war.

The decision by Milan Levar, 43, the former commander of a reconnaissance intelligence unit; Zdenko Bando, 41, a former military police commander, and Zdenko Ropac, 45, a former secret intelligence police officer, to approach The Hague is one of the very rare cases in which senior officers have volunteered to describe abuses committed by their own soldiers to the tribunal.

But the men, two of whom have fled their native town of Gospic because of attacks, said in interviews recently that the tribunal took so long to investigate the reports of

massacres that local authorities had time to destroy some of the evidence. They also assert that the tribunal has not provided them and their families with promised protection.

"We do not understand what is going on," said Mr. Levar, who first met with tribunal investigators last August in Gospic, 100 miles south of Zagreb. "We have been branded traitors. We live under constant pressure. The police chief in Gospic and the local army commander are war criminals. What kind of protection can we expect from these men?"

Christian Chartier, the spokesman for the tribunal, said in a telephone interview that it was not the tribunal's policy to comment on its investigations. But Mr. Chartier confirmed that investigators had met with the three men and twice offered them "proposals for protection" that he said the former soldiers had "turned down."

"We are still discussing this with them," he said, refusing to elaborate. "We are hopeful that a proposal may be accepted."

The men say that a few of the mass graves were cleared by the Croatian military shortly before tribunal investigators visited Gospic last summer, but that other sites remain untouched. The men, two of whom went to The Hague in December to meet again with investigators, also said they turned over videotapes showing Croatian forces killing civilians.

"I was in a position to see everything that was happening," Mr. Bando said. "The orders to carry out these killings came to us from the Ministry of Defense. Those who committed these crimes were never punished, in fact they were promoted within the military, the police and the political structure. They remain in power. We find this inexcusable."

Mr. Bando, who is unemployed and facing an unexplained eviction notice from his small apartment in Zagreb, said that in October 1991 local police officials pulled up to his office with a truck piled with bodies, including those of women and children.

"Blood was dripping through the floor boards," he said. "These people had just been executed. The driver was looking for a place to bury them."

Mr. Levar said he witnessed the deaths of about 50 people. Mr. Ropac said that he knew of 127 ethnic Serbs who were killed in Gospic before he left the town and "that the figure grew later."

The allegations of widespread killings by nationalist Croats around Gospic were bolstered last September when one of the executioners Miro Bajramovic, confessed in The Feral Tribune, an independent weekly, to the murder of 72 civilians. Mr. Bajramovic was arrested after the publication of the confession and remains in prison.

The three former soldiers said that Mr. Bajramovic was being subjected to frequent beatings and intense "Psychological torture" by his Croatian jailers.

Their accusations have been impossible to substantiate, though.

Gospic, which had some 15,000 inhabitants before the war, is now a forlorn, heavily damaged town with just 3,000 people.

The former soldiers angrily assert that those who carried out the abductions and murders came from "the scum of the town" and were primarily interested in looting the homes and property of the Serbs and Croats they killed.

"These people killed my town—the town of my father and grandfather," Mr. Levar said.

"I doubt it will ever revive. They killed it to get very rich. This dirty money keeps them in power. All we want is for them to pay for their crimes."

2 BOSNIAN SERBS SURRENDER TO U.N.

BOSANSKI SAMAC, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, FEB. 14.—(AP).—Two Bosnian, Serbs surrendered today to the United Nations war crimes tribunal, the first Serbian suspects to do so voluntarily.

Driving their own cars, with officials from the United States Embassy as passengers, the suspects, Milan Silmic and Miroslav Tadic, left for Tuzia, where NATO-led troops will meet them for the journey to the court, in The Hague.

Indicted on war crimes charges in 1995, the two men say they are innocent.

They said they believed that conditions had been set for a fair trial.

H. RES. 375

Whereas Dobroslav Paraga, who has twice been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, has endured hardship for openly calling on the Government of Croatia to honor its commitments under the Helsinki Accords to respect the fundamental human rights of all the citizens of Croatia;

Whereas Dobroslav Paraga had been tried on three occasions by the courts of the former Government of Yugoslavia, the initial charge being that, in 1980, he, along with a Jewish Croatian student, Ernest Brajder, authored a petition opposing torture in Yugoslavia and calling for the release of political prisoners;

Whereas, as a result, both men were arrested and, three days later Ernest Brajder died under what the Department of State calls "mysterious circumstances";

Whereas, in 1986, Mr. Paraga sued the Government of Yugoslavia for injuries, both physical and psychological, inflicted on him by prison authorities during his imprisonment;

Whereas the regime and court in Zagreb denied him a fair and just trial, an account of which was set forth in the Department of State's annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1987;

Whereas the Government of Yugoslavia forbade Mr. Paraga in 1987 to speak out publicly in any way about his experiences as a political prisoner and the Government of Croatia has continued this prohibition against the fundamental political and human rights of Mr. Paraga;

Whereas the Government of Croatia persecuted Mr. Paraga for criticizing his country in the United States in 1993 and he was subsequently stripped of his post as Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Human Rights of the Croatian Parliament;

Whereas in August 1997 the Government of Croatia brought charges against Mr. Paraga within days of his meeting with investigators from the Hague War Crimes Tribunal to which he turned over documentation involving allegations against several high officials of the Government of Croatia;

Whereas, in violation of this order of silence, Dobroslav Paraga has come to the West to speak out about human rights abuses in Croatia;

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Whereas, upon his return to Croatia, Dobroslav Paraga risks imprisonment again because of his open criticism of the Government of Croatia's human rights abuses; and

Whereas in 1998 Dobroslav Paraga called on the Government of Croatia to take the following actions: (1) to establish independent television and radio stations in Croatia; (2) to allow full freedom of the media in Croatia; (3) to allow free and fair elections to take place in Croatia; (4) to establish a judiciary and lower court system that is independent from the ruling party or any other party in Croatia; (5) to re-establish the independence of the Croatian Party of Rights (CPR) that was illegally disbanded in 1993, including the reinstatement to the Croatian Parliament of the 5 seats of the Croatian Party of Rights; and (6) to end the terror and abuse of justice perpetrated by the Government of Croatia against Dobroslav Paraga and the Croatian Party of Rights: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That is the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Croatia—

(1) in recognition of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should guarantee its citizens fundamental human rights and freedoms;

(2)(A) should establish independent television and radio stations in Croatia;

(B) should allow full freedom of the media in Croatia;

(C) should allow free and fair elections to take place in Croatia;

(D) should establish a judiciary and lower court system that is independent from the ruling party or any other party in Croatia;

(E) should re-establish the independence of the Croatian Party of Rights (CPR) that was illegally disbanded in 1993, including the reinstatement to the Croatian Parliament of the 5 seats of the Croatian Party of Rights; and

(F) should end the terror and abuse of justice perpetrated by the Government of Croatia against Dobroslav Paraga and the Croatian Party of Rights;

(3) should dismiss the charges currently pending against human rights activist Dobroslav Paraga and end all forms of harassment against him and his family; and

(4) should conduct an investigation into the death of Ernest Brajder, who, according to the Department of State, died under "mysterious circumstances", and should make its findings public.

MIKE BORDALLO'S APPOINTMENT TO THE SUPREME COURT OF GUAM

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 16, 1998

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 19, another native son of Guam will advance the course of Guam's judicial history when he is installed as a judge of the Superior Court of Guam. Although this history is relatively brief, the judicial branch of the Government of Guam coming into existence in 1950, the name of Michael J. Bordallo will join a distinguished list of Chamorro men and women who have sworn to interpret the law for the people of Guam from the bench of the Superior Court. Like his peers, Mike brings with him an inherent love and understanding

of his native language and culture, as well as practical experience defending Chamorro rights, both as a practicing attorney and as a private citizen. Whether it is enjoining the desecration of ancient burial sites or encouraging the talents of local artists and musicians, Michael Bordallo is an active proponent of Guam's cultural identity and heritage.

Michael was born on July 14, 1961 to Attorney Fred E. Bordallo and my sister, Annie Underwood Bordallo, who instilled in him a love of justice and the law and a strong sense of identity. Mike graduated from Saint Anthony School in Tamuning in 1975 and from Father Duenas Memorial High School in 1979. He then went on to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, and earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1983. After returning to Guam, Mike went to work in his father's law office. He also served as a legislative consultant to the Guam Legislature's Committee on Education. He later returned to Notre Dame University, attended law school, and received his Juris Doctor degree in 1987. After passing the California Bar Exam, Mike returned to Guam and went to work as an Assistant Attorney General representing Child Protective Services in the Family Court. He was sworn in as a member of the Guam Bar Association in 1988, then went into private practice with his father.

For the last six years, Mike practiced law alongside his first cousin, Michael F. Phillips, in the firm of Phillips & Bordallo, P.C. With much affection and admiration, many of the friends and family of the two attorneys often refer to them simply as "Mike and Mike." During his career, Mike Bordallo has represented and participated in numerous actions involving issues such as desecration of ancient Chamorro burial grounds, the military land takings following World War II, the implementation of the Chamorro Land Trust Act, and a Cost of Living Allowance for Government of Guam retirees. He also has represented several legislative committees since 1992, and has represented the Territorial Board of Education and the Guam Department of Education.

In 1989, when the House Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Ron DeLugo conducted the first-ever hearing on the Guam Commonwealth Act in Honolulu, Hawaii, Mike Bordallo helped found the Guam Commonwealth Hearings Association, which raised funds to subsidize the travel costs of Guam residents who otherwise would not have been able to attend and submit testimonies at the hearing.

In view of his activities in a wide range of island issues, Michael J. Bordallo was appointed to the bench by the Government of Guam and unanimously confirmed by the 24th Guam Legislature earlier this year. I join his parents, Fred and Annie, his brothers and sisters, his wife Carla and their children, Joshua and Stephanie, in congratulating him and placing trust in his sense of justice to guide him on the bench.

A TRIBUTE TO JAMES A. ROONEY

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 16, 1998

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. James A. Rooney of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Mr. Rooney will be designated as the "Man of the Year" by the Greater Pittston Friendly Sons of St. Patrick at their 84th annual banquet. I am honored and pleased to have been asked to participate in this event.

The fifth of nine children of the late George J. and Catherine Horan Rooney, Jim was born in Pittston, Pennsylvania. He attended Jenkins Township High School and earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Scranton.

A veteran of World War II, Jim was awarded two bronze stars for his service in Europe. He is a member of various veterans' organizations in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

During Jim's career, he served as a weighmaster/shipper for the Pennsylvania Coal Company, an accountant at the State Correctional Institute, and an accounting field supervisor in the Office of the Comptroller of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. At the time of his retirement, he was Chief Financial Officer at the White Haven Center.

Jim is active in his church and the community. He is a Grand Knight and the financial secretary of the Knights of Columbus.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Rooney has been a member of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick for over 45 years. He is also a member of the Donegal Society and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. I join the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in honoring Jim as "Man of the Year" and send my best wishes for a successful event.

IN HONOR OF DR. HECTOR GARCIA

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 16, 1998

Ms. SANCHEZ. Ms. Speaker, today I rise to honor the late Dr. Hector Garcia. It was on this day, March 26th, that Dr. Garcia was born. It is fitting that we should pay tribute to him on this special day of remembrance.

Born in Mexico, his family fled the country when he was only four years old. This was during the Mexican Revolution when so many sought refuge in the United States. The Garcia family settled in Texas where young Hector Garcia's life began its course. After his graduation from the University of Texas Medical School, Garcia joined the Army. He served his country overseas, in World War II, as an infantryman, combat engineer and medical corps officer. His distinguished service earned him the Bronze Star with six Battle Stars.

After the war, he began a medical practice in Corpus Christi, Texas. As a medical doctor for the Veterans Administration, he saw the need to assist the Latino veterans in their fight for benefits. There was a great deal of prejudice toward the Latinos who had fought for their country, yet were not afforded the same rights and privileges given to others. At this