

**THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN
RIGHTS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

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APPENDIX

LETTER FROM MICHAEL SOTIRHOS, U.S. AMBASSADOR FROM GREECE

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
ATHENS, GREECE.

February 18, 1991.

Office of the Ambassador

DEAR MR. MINISTER: I have carried to my government the Greek government's concerns over several points in the 1991 Department of State Report on Human Rights in Greece, as has your ambassador in Washington. My government has asked me to share the following comments with you on some of those points.

The United States of America sees the Hellenic Republic as a stable democracy, committed to protecting all the human rights of all its citizens. As we noted in our public and private statements during the recent visit of Foreign Minister Samaras, the United States is committed to promoting the security and well-being of Greece. Nothing in the 1991 Report on Human Rights legitimizes irredentist claims against Greece or its territory. Moreover, as an ally and a partner, the United States remains a defender of the territorial integrity of Greece.

We acknowledge, as stated in our Human Rights Report, that under the Treaty of Lausanne, Greece recognizes an official Muslim minority in western Thrace, now comprising some 130,000 ethnic Turks, Pomaks, and Gypsies.

In our view the Slavophone persons to whom the 1991 report refers are citizens of Greece, with all the rights and responsibilities of other citizens. The fact that these persons are characterized by the use of a Slavic language as well as Greek does not imply that their rights and responsibilities differ from those of other Greeks or that they are not an integral part of the Greek nation. As we do not know exactly how many such persons live in northern Greece, the 1991 report gives an estimate based on a variety of private and official views. We shall correct any information that is not accurate.

Your government and mine have worked hard to promote the principles of Helsinki. We have joined, for example, in approving the Copenhagen document of the Conference on the Human Dimension, which recognized that "to belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice," and that persons who so identify themselves have the right to maintain and develop their cultural identity in all its aspects.

U.S. requires the Department of State to prepare and to submit to the Congress, for every country in the world, an annual Report on Human Rights. It is in that context that we must discuss the situation of minorities in particular. We thus have a special responsibility to provide to Congress full reports on such issues.

I hope the above remarks put into useful perspective the 1991 Human Rights Report on Greece. As two democratic governments, I believe Greece and the United States should work together to promote our shared human rights goals and thus further the fundamental friendship and goodwill which exists between Greece and the United States.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL SOTIRHOS,
AMBASSADOR.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOBROSLAV PARAGA

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to submit a clarifying statement on the Department of State's "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1990." In the section of its report devoted to Yugoslavia under the heading "Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association," the State Department makes the following

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Khmara, and one that is not mentioned, namely the human rights aspect of Mr. Gorbachev's March 17 referendum on his proposal for a new All Union Treaty.

Mr. Chairman, the case of Stepan Khmara certainly is well known in the Congress. A number of members of this committee and nearly one hundred Senators and Congressmen have written either to President Gorbachev or to Leonid Kravchuk, President of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR about the circumstances surrounding the arrest and incarceration of Mr. Khmara. On January 28 and 29 when Mykhailo Horyn, a founder and Vice President of Rukh, was in Washington he commented on the number of letters that have been received in Ukraine. Horyn also stated that Khmara's defense team had completed a review of all of the prosecution's case (as assembled at that time) and found no reliable evidence to support the charges. However, Horyn, a former political prisoner in Perm Camp 36 forewarned that the result of the Khmara trial will not depend on the evidence but on the political climate.

We will not repeat here all of the details about the set-up and manipulated arrest of Stepan Khmara or the outrageous procedures used by the Communist majority in the Supreme Soviet to waive Khmara's rights and protections as an elected Deputy to that legislative body. The State Department's report briefly outlines that situation on pages 1306 and 1307. However, we do make one observation regarding the often postponed trial of this long time human rights activist. As Horyn said, the outcome of Khmara's trial will depend on the political climate. The fact is that Khmara's trial will take place in an environment where the KGB and the Communist Party are looking for every opportunity to divide and disrupt the democratic forces in Ukraine. We are concerned that the trial will be used to present bogus evidence that alleges informers in Rukh and throughout the democratic movement; allegations that will be created to initiate distrust among colleagues. The KGB and the Communist Party are masters of destabilization techniques and we fear that Khmara's trial will be used as a vehicle for a disinfection campaign by the repressive forces in the Soviet Union.

There may be no way for us here in the United States to keep such a disinfection campaign from using Stepan Khmara's trial. However, we do believe that it is most important that the United States keep the spotlight of world public attention on the activities of the prosecutors and the KGB. In this regard we acknowledge again the many letters and telegrams that have been sent on Khmara's behalf by Members of Congress. We know that those expressions of interest have had an effect. As mentioned, another issue of tremendous concern to us in the March 17 referendum on the proposed All Union Treaty. On its face, a referendum where people will be provided the opportunity to vote, is not a human rights violation and we acknowledge this fact. However, we do see the referendum as an event raising very serious concerns with human rights implications.

Initially it is important to understand that the "center's" referendum violates the rights of the citizens of the republics of the Soviet Union. Article 70 of the 1922 Union Treaty states that the republics, and not the citizens of the individual republics, are the subjects of the U.S.S.R. The referendum disregards the sovereignty of the republics set out in the treaty and calls for the citizens of all republics to vote on a question that is intended by the Kremlin to bind the citizens of all republics.

The fact is that the March 17 referendum is a political maneuver against the republics and it is designed to polarize the population of the Soviet ire, among other things. Gorbachev is gambling to gain a political legitimacy he does not now have and to secure a result that will then be used to justify repression. The center's adventuring of the referendum is intended to suggest that people in the Soviet Empire are going to be allowed to express themselves openly and freely on whether they favor the continuation of the empire. That issue has already been addressed by the elected bodies of each republic. The Baltic States have each declared their independence from the Union and on February 10th the people of Lithuania overwhelmingly supported the previous actions by their elected government. Other republics, including Ukraine, have adopted Declarations of Sovereignty and have proclaimed that the laws of their republic supersede the laws of the Soviet Union.

The fact is that from Lithuania, to Russia, to Ukraine, to Georgia, the elected legislatures of the republics have rejected the dominance of the empire. The problem for Gorbachev and the center is that they do not like the conclusion reached by the individual republics. So, now, having been rejected, the unelected Mr. Gorbachev is saying that he will afford "the people" the opportunity to decide on "the question of continuing the Union. However, the center's referendum ignores the status of the republics under the current All Union Treaty and the center intends to conduct a vote that will not be tallied by republic. Whatever else Gorbachev's referendum might be, it has no realistic chance of providing a true indication of the opinion of

statement, "In Zagreb in December, a banned public meeting by a legally registered party, the Croatian Party of Rights, took place without hindrance."

As the President of the Croatian Party of Rights, I must admit to being as amazed as I am outraged at the apparent lack of impartiality in this statement. The following is an account of what I experienced, first hand, in both organizing and holding this rally.

The Croatian Party of Rights registered this peaceful rally with the appropriate governing authorities in the accepted manner prior to announcing the rally. At the time of registering the rally our request to hold the rally was not denied. We then started to put out flyers and posters announcing the date, time, place and reason for the rally which coincidentally was to express our dissatisfaction with the undemocratic and unilateral actions by the Tudjman government.

When it became obvious to everyone that the expected turnout for the rally would be in the hundreds of thousands, the governing authorities responded by having law enforcement officers tear down our posters and flyers.

On the day of the public meeting the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Croatia, which is still a ministry of police, served us with a written decree banning our registered meeting. Then, starting about 3 hours before the scheduled start of our rally, news bulletins were broadcast on both radio and television every 10 minutes stating that the rally had been banned and that all resources available to law enforcement authorities would be exercised against anyone who attempted to attend the rally.

About two thousand people joined with me anyhow while the governing authorities encircled Jelacic Square, the site of the rally, with paramilitary units in order to prevent anyone from attending the rally or to detain and arrest anyone if they did.

While the armed paramilitary units confiscated all of our banners, and detained the vehicle that the banners were in, I started to hold my speech on the public announcement system which we had set up in the square. The paramilitary units unplugged the electricity to the public announcement system and I then continued my speech on a megaphone.

Although other speakers were scheduled to speak, they were not able to because the paramilitary units were threatening all in attendance with detention and arrest. The paramilitary units thus succeeded in disbanding all of us who did manage to attend this peaceful demonstration.

I do not know of any civilized person who would think that the events that we experienced, and which I have just described, constitute the holding of a public meeting "without hindrance."

I know that disinformation is not intentionally spread by the State Department. In this case an objective report could have been filed simply by corroborating the information that the State Department possessed with the leader of the group holding the rally.

In the hope of more objective reporting by the State Department in the future, I would like to extend an open invitation and personal request that the State Department assign one of its representatives to attend any future rallies held by the Croatian Party of Rights as my guest.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF UKRAINE 2000: THE WASHINGTON COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

Good morning Mr. Chairman. My name is Robert McConnell. I am Chairman of the Government Relations Committee of Ukraine 2000. The Washington Committee in Support of Ukraine. Ukraine 2000 is one of the twenty-three committees across the country that have been formed to support the Popular Movement In Ukraine (Rukh). Ukraine 2000, like its sister committees across the country, is made up of area residents who have a deep interest in Ukraine. My statement is on behalf of Ukraine 2000.

We applaud this committee for holding this important hearing to review and consider the Department of States' annual report on the status of Human Rights in countries around the world. It is most important that the United States Congress and this committee focus on this very important matter.

The Department's report discusses a wide range of human rights concerns relating to the Soviet Union and treats specifically a number of issues relating to Ukraine. Our statement today focuses on two particular issues, one that is mentioned in the report before the committee, the case of People's Deputy Stepan