

**THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN CROATIA -- HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.
(Extension of Remarks - May 26, 1993)**

[Page: E1378]

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.
in the House of Representatives

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1993

- Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, I enter into the **Congressional Record** a statement by Dobroslav Paraga, a member of the Parliament of Croatia, detailing his perspective on the present political climate in Croatia. Mr. Paraga has been in Washington, DC for the past few weeks briefing Members of Congress about the authoritarian tendencies of President Franjo Tudjman's administration, which has demonstrated an intolerance toward free press and free expression in Croatia. For those Members of Congress who were not able to meet with Mr. Paraga during his visit, I bring to your attention the following statement for your consideration:

In my country of Croatia, many people, young and old, have given their lives for independence, democracy, and for a better future for those whom they have left behind. We must not allow their lives to have been given in vain. We must all--especially those of us serving in the political life of Croatia--strive on a daily basis to bring life to those ideals for which they have died.

Thus, I stand before you here today. My cause is to further democracy in my homeland and to counter all those who do the opposite, no matter who they may be or how high up in power they are. As a Member of Croatian Parliament and as the Vice Chairman of its Committee on Human and Minority Rights, I give voice to those whose civil liberties have been violated by the present-day government of Franjo Tudjman. This includes the press in Croatia which has been taken over by the ruling party. It includes all the real opposition parties, which have been marginalized by the drive toward a one-party state. It includes the minorities within Croatia--Muslims, Jews, Albanians, and Serbs--who have been discriminated against and persecuted.

It also includes the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As president of the Croatian Party of Rights, I condemn Franjo Tudjman's brutal policies toward the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The forces of Tudjman's agent, Mate Boban, are taking part in the ethnic cleansing of Muslim populations and the division of the country. Nothing could be more damaging to the future of Croatia and the region as a whole than totalitarian philosophies of government such as ethnic purity and one-party rule.

There are many similarities between the methods and policies of Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic. They are particularly visible in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We have evidence which shows that Tudjman and Milosevic have on many occasions secretly discussed and agreed to a partition of that country. They have also openly talked about an exchange of populations and territories. Their victims today are primarily the Muslims, but also all those Croatians who are opposed to the Tudjman-Boban policy and their proclamation of the so-called 'Community of Herzeg-Bosna'.

Mate Boban, Tudjman's man in Bosnia-Herzegovina, liquidated numerous Croats who are opposed to the division of Bosnia. The most prominent instance of this was the murder of leading volunteers from our own party last August. General Blaz Kraljevic and his eight aides, who were members of the legitimate Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, were machine-gunned at a road-block by Boban's police, the very same way the Vice-President my party had been killed in Zagreb. Our volunteer units, which are all under the command of the Bosnian Army, are mixed units with Croats, Muslims, and even a few Serbs.

Now Tudjman and Boban are internationally provoking clashes with the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This serves to postpone any outside military intervention against Serbia and the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They are using UNPROFOR units to assist in the expulsion of Muslim populations, just as the Serbs do, so as to accomplish the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croat soldiers in Boban's HVO units have opened numerous camps to isolate and expel Muslims.

Presidents Tudjman and Milosevic have a symbiotic relation. They help keep each other in power. Sometimes they collaborate directly. We Croatians in the Party of Rights stand against all aspects of Serbian aggression against the Croat and Muslim people, as well as against Tudjman's policy which is destroying the positive image of Croatia in the world community and is nullifying the meaning of the losses suffered by Croatians in defense of their own country.

Inside Croatia, political murders have become commonplace. The president of one of Croatia's largest labor unions, Milan Krivokuca, was shot dead on his doorstep. Likewise Marina Nuic, Vice President of the Croatian Democratic Party in Kraljevica, was kidnapped in downtown Zagreb and murdered by one of Tudjman's well-known military groups in Slavonia. Despite the fact that their murderers are known, no one has been brought to trial.

There is not democracy in Croatia. What Croatia has is a virtual dictator, Franjo Tudjman. He never confers with Parliament on important internal or external policy decisions for the country. There is no freedom of the judiciary.

Tudjman's Government has also taken over all of the media in Croatia. The latest brutal example of this was two months ago when Tudjman sent police forces literally storming onto the premises of the last independent paper in Croatia, Free Dalmatia, forcibly physically expelling more than one hundred journalists and

editors and replacing them with people who would obey the party line. Tudjman's Government has also brought about criminal charges against several prominent journalists who have openly criticized Tudjman and his policies.

There is now a law against `verbal offense.' This is used to punish criticism of the President. One of the charges against me in an indictment in January 1992 was my `verbal offense' of criticizing Tudjman in an interview in Free Dalmatia, which was then still an independent newspaper.

Tudjman even permits slurs by his government and party against his political opponents' and critics' ethnic heritage. The highest officials of the ruling party have publicly made racist remarks about the bloodlines of certain individuals. They have made public denunciations of Professor Slobodan Lang because of his `Jewish blood'. They tried to denigrate, on the basis of heritage, my colleague in Parliament and president of another leading opposition party, Drazen Budisa, because he has some `Serbian blood'. Finally, the Vecernji List newspaper, which is directly under the control of the ruling party, has raised questions about how I, having some Jewish blood, could have the audacity to participate in Croatian politics since I do not have, according to Vecernji List, `clean Croatian blood'. The same sort of remarks were made about Mladen Schwartz, the editor of my party's newspaper, who is a Jew by origin.

The law on citizenship gives the police the power to decide who is to be given citizenship papers and who is not. They are using this to refuse citizenship to Muslims and Serbs who live in Croatia. They are also using it to refuse citizenship to Croats who have ideas of their own. My wife was almost refused citizenship. This is another tool in the hands of the ruling party to blackmail individuals and groups.

I would like to emphasize that my party, the Croatian Party of Rights, is in essence a liberal party which defends human and civil rights of all Croatian citizens who obey its laws and order. This is very clear from our Party Program.

It is natural that I have become Vice Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights and Minority Rights in the Croatian Parliament. I have been working for human rights in the former Yugoslavia ever since the late 1970s. I was first arrested for this in 1980. I spent four years in the prisons of the old Communist regime. The U.S. Senate adopted a resolution in 1989 in my defense.

I have continued the fight for human rights without stop. Unfortunately the problem has also continued without stop. The collapse of Communism brought a brief period of relatively greater freedom, but the spirit of the one-party system has come back, along with its methods.

In some ways the new tyranny is more brutal than the old one was in its dying days. The new tyranny is trying to establish itself and has to get rid of all the free press and parties which sprang up in 1990. The philosophy of the Tudjman regime is to have a single party which represents the whole people, with the people being

understood as an ethnically pure group. This is Communist totalitarianism without Communism. There is a word for this: it is fascism.

There has been a problem of new fascist or semi-fascist regimes in several of the countries that have just escaped from Communism--Serbia, Croatia, Romania. It is by no means unique to Croatia. The people of Croatia do not like fascism, just like ordinary people everywhere do not like fascism. But there are fascistic movements in all of the ex-Communist countries, alongside the liberal democratic parties like my own which are fighting against fascism. Some of these movements have a full-fledged Nazi philosophy. There is a dangerous Nazi movement in Russia.

The old Communist nomenklatura is trying to keep its power through the new fascism. Tudjman himself had been a high-ranking General under the old Communist regime and was used to its methods. Milosevic is the most perfect case of someone who has transformed the Communist regime directly into a fascist regime. Milosevic and Tudjman are two different forms of the same terrible problem. Together they are the source of 90% of the trouble in the former Yugoslavia.

More than a year ago, the Foreign Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haris Silajdzic, said that the real solution to the problem was to arrest Milosevic and Tudjman. Everything that has happened since has proved him right.

The Tudjman Government has been trying to distract attention from its own authoritarian policies by making false accusations against me and other opposition leaders in Croatia. It has so far as to run a well-financed campaign in the West to discredit myself and others. We have the evidence to prove that Tudjman's Government hired two P.R. agencies here in the United States just to blacken my name and to spread lies about me.

Inside Croatia, my own deputy, Mr. Ante Paradzik, was killed in an ambush 20 months ago. He was machine-gunned by Croatian police at a checkpoint, while he was in my car. Today his murderers are still Croatian police. Not one of them has been found guilty and sentenced due to a half-hearted prosecution. In less than 2 years, 26 members of my party were murdered under suspicious circumstances. No one has been found guilty in a single case. Rather, these individuals were all labelled 'fascists' by Tudjman and his aides, thereby excusing their deaths.

There have already been three assassination attempts made against me. We have evidence to show all were in liaison with the Croatian Government. No one has been held accountable for this.

Instead of these people being put on trial, I am being put on trial. I am returning to Croatia to face trial on June 1st, on the same charges I faced a year and a half ago--for supposedly attempting to overthrow his Government. That time around, the charge was dismissed by the Supreme Court of Croatia. But after that

decision, President Tudjman dismissed the President of the Supreme Court. Now the same charge is being brought against me--but in a Military Court.

The head of the Supreme Court is no longer around to protect me. A military court will not be the best place for a fair trial. But I must return to defend my reputation, my friends and my county. Others in my party are also defendants in this trial. I will not forsake them. I ask you, the free people and the free press in America, not to forsake me and the people of Croatia who are still struggling for freedom.

For all of us whose lives and liberties are at stake, I would like to thank the American Congressmen who yesterday sent an official letter to President Clinton, asking him to press Mr. Tudjman to allow an independent media and free elections. The Croatian people, of whom I am an elected representative, sincerely appreciate all of their efforts, both present and future, in helping Croatia become the democratic and just society it wants to be. Thank you.

[Page: E1379]

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