

WANTED: A CREDIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IN YUGOSLAVIA -- HON. WM. S. BROOMFIELD (Extension of Remarks - September 06, 1989)

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HON. WM. S. BROOMFIELD**in the House of Representatives***WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1989*

- Mr. BROOMFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my colleagues in the Congress the tragic and heroic story of Mr. Dobroslav Paraga, a young Yugoslav-Croatian human rights activist who has risked his life for the cause of human rights in his native country. After meeting this brave man, and hearing his moving story, I am convinced that Yugoslavia will never know real peace until the human rights policies of that government are changed.
- As a university student in 1980, Mr. Paraga drafted a petition calling for amnesty for political prisoners and an end to the use of torture by the Government of Yugoslavia. His 'Zabreb Petition' was an effort to end the appalling human rights abuses in Yugoslav prisons and improve the basic human freedoms of prisoners from all of Yugoslavia's many ethnic groups.
- After receiving Mr. Paraga's petition, Yugoslav authorities arrested him and charged him with distributing hostile propaganda. He was found guilty and sentenced to jail. He spent 4 years in prison and 2 of those years were spent on Naked Island. While in prison he was intimidated and tortured. He had his leg broken, and was subjected to frequent beatings. For 10 days, he was stripped naked during cold weather and was locked in a filthy cage. When he protested this brutal treatment by going on a hunger fast, he was forcibly fed by having a hose put down his throat.
- His friend, a young university student named Ernst Brajder, was also arrested for his involvement in circulating the petition and died under what the Department of State called mysterious circumstances. Mr. Paraga believes that his friend was killed by prison officials.
- After Mr. Paraga was released from jail, he learned that his health was permanently damaged as a result of his sufferings while in prison. He bravely filed a lawsuit against the Government of Yugoslavia and accused it of violating his human rights and maltreating him. He was then given a suspended sentence by a judge and prohibited from speaking openly until 1991. He was later banished from Croatia and now resides in more liberal Slovenia. Yugoslav agents, however, still constantly monitor Mr. Paraga's daily activities.

- It is important to note that the Department of State's recent 'Country Reports On Human Rights Practices for 1988' included the following information concerning Yugoslavia:
- Although the Yugoslav Constitution and law forbid torture, various sources, including former prisoners and Amnesty International [AI], report that people are sometimes beaten, mistreated, or threatened during pretrial detention, while serving sentences, or while being questioned as possible witnesses. Reports of such abuses, including occasional deaths that result, emerge in the press, as do reports of steps taken by authorities to deal with unwarranted use of force. Croatian dissident Dobroslav Paraga is still under a conditionally suspended sentence imposed in 1987. At that time, he was tried because of articles he wrote about abuse he had experienced in prison. In December, Paraga was denied a passport to attend the 40th anniversary of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights. Authorities finally granted his request, but only after Paraga staged a 17-day hunger strike.
- Mr. Paraga is now in America and is telling the world his tragic story. Through his brave revelations about the Yugoslav Government's human rights abuses, he has painted a true picture of today's Yugoslavia. The Helsinki accords and other international human rights conventions appear to matter little to the Yugoslav officials who oversee prisons in that country. America cannot sit back and ignore the horrible human rights practices of Yugoslavia.
- Congressmen **Yatron, Bereuter** and I recently forwarded a letter to the Secretary of State urging him to encourage the Yugoslav Government to respect the basic freedoms of its citizens and not take action against Mr. Paraga when he returns home. I am also considering introducing legislation in the House which would express the sense of the Congress about the ongoing human rights abuses in Yugoslavia and the terrible mistreatment of Mr. Paraga.
- It a world that is growing increasingly aware of human rights and the need to protect those basic human freedoms, all of us are shocked to learn that Yugoslavia, a country that is trying to project a good image here in the United States, is permitting the torture and abuse of its prisoners. This primitive and barbaric treatment of prisoners must end if Yugoslavia is to join the family of responsible nations that treat their prisoners humanely.

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