
Documentation

Eagleburger blames Croatia for 'civil war'

U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger delivered a speech to a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, on Jan. 7. The speech was a farewell summary of the alleged foreign policy feats of the George Bush administration. As these excerpts from an unofficial transcript make clear, Eagleburger credits the administration for the lack of a bloodbath (so far) in the former Soviet Union, but blames the bloodbath in Yugoslavia on local hotheads. The Kiev speech to which he refers occurred in August 1991, when Bush, returning from a Moscow visit with Gorbachov, launched what was viewed by such former communist colonies as Ukraine, Croatia, and Slovenia, as a ruthless attack on their aspirations to national independence.

. . . The post-World War II, and post-colonial state system itself, is breaking down, as many nations are increasingly unable to perform basic governmental functions, to control their internal affairs, or to resist particularist and separatist tendencies within their borders. Here Somalia and Yugoslavia are the most egregious, but by no means the only examples of this tendency towards fragmentation. . . .

Today we take for granted something which experts and historians would have found incredible to imagine only a decade ago, namely that the disengagement of the Soviet Union from eastern Europe, and the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. itself could be achieved so quickly, so thoroughly, and, above all, so peacefully.

History holds few, if any, examples of an empire collapsing without an angry spasm of violence. And no one expected the Communist Party to relinquish its monopoly of power at home, and the imperial domination abroad, without a fight.

It was entirely conceivable that the Soviet Union's demise would be accompanied by civil strife, war in Europe, and perhaps even the risk of global nuclear exchange. That it was not, I think, is due in part to George Bush's skillful, though sometimes misunderstood, diplomacy. . . .

A second manifestation of the global disorder inherent today is the eruption in the conflict of ancient tribal, ethnic, and religious rivalries. We see this most obviously in the former Yugoslavia. But we need to understand that Yugoslavia is but the most obvious manifestation of what is going on today in many places, and what will likely characterize the



Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger. He should trade in his walking cane for Neville Chamberlain's umbrella.

international landscape for perhaps decades to come. . . .

Let me make just one other comment with regard to the Muslim world and that issue. There is no question that our inability to bring the Yugoslav slaughter to an end in Bosnia has had a very substantial impact on the attitudes of the Muslim world, and has encouraged Muslim extremism. And as it goes on, it encourages it more. . . . And I come back to the point I made: you do things if they're absolutely essential; but if they're not, you do them when you can make them succeed. So, there is a difference between what we've done in Somalia and Yugoslavia. But, I have to say to you again on an issue which I'm the first to tell you this administration has not resolved; namely, the Yugoslav problem—it has cost us in the Muslim world—not only us, but all of western Europe, as well.

For many, Yugoslavia is another example of administration policy behind the curve and out of touch with American ideals. I personally do not believe that violence could have been avoided under any circumstances.

But I do remain convinced that the republics' unilateral and uncoordinated declarations of independence, which we unsuccessfully opposed, led inexorably to civil war. Then,

as now, the only alternative to perpetual bloodshed was for the parties to negotiate their separation from each other, and meanwhile to guarantee respect for pluralism and the rights of minorities within their borders.

And the only responsible policy for the United States, in my view, was the one we followed: namely, to discourage unilateral acts intended to avoid such negotiations and such guarantees. As the President rightly said in his, if you will excuse me, maligned and misunderstood speech in Kiev, it was our policy not to support, and I quote, "those who promote a suicidal nationalism based on ethnic hatred."

Of course all of this begs the question of what we should do when the irrational forces of history and hatred prevail over our appeals to reason, as they are doing today in Yugoslavia, in some parts of the former Soviet Union, Somalia, and elsewhere.

There are, unfortunately, no simple answers. As the President stated this week at West Point, there will be times when our vital interests are at stake and we must intervene, as we did in the Gulf. There will be times when a human tragedy compels us to intervene, providing we can justify the costs to the American people, as we have in Somalia and on behalf of the Kurds of northern Iraq. And there will be times when neither the force of American ideas, nor the force of American arms, can make a difference to peoples who are truly unwilling to coexist peacefully with each other.

Appeasement worse than 1938: Bosnian President

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic spoke in Washington, D.C. to the Carnegie Endowment on Jan. 8, one day after the smug presentation of Larry Eagleburger in the same location. In the question period he charged that the world's response to the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis is worse than British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy to Adolf Hitler in Munich in 1938. The Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, he said, occurred before Hitler's followers had committed genocide. "Here we have genocide and Europe is watching." The excerpts reprinted here are from an unofficial transcript.

Briefly, the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is extremely difficult. Primarily, I would give a few basic data. In the last nine months, more than 200,000 people have been killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which means approximately 1,000 per day. We don't know the precise number of people killed because some areas of the country have been completely cut off and we don't know the destiny of many people. Many of

them are considered to be disappeared and we don't know what happened exactly to them. Some of the regions are still cut off so that no one can reach them, be it the Red Cross, the Unprofor [U.N. "peacekeeping" troops], the humanitarian organizations.

You probably heard about problems concerning the attempts of Unprofor to enter the town of Banja Luka. It's a large town in northern Bosnia. It is under control of Serbs. It has about 150,000 inhabitants. And there were disputes and discussions for more than 40 days. And finally, Unprofor had to give up and go to Makedonija. Why didn't they manage to enter this town? Serbs, who are holding this town under control, wanted to avoid having any witnesses in town because in that town there is open genocide.

If that is the case in a town like Banja Luka, then one can imagine what is happening in some small villages and small towns all around the country. It's well known that the towns of Brcko, Bijeljina, and Prijedor for instance, have been the scenes of mass massacres, and no organization, no one, has managed to enter these towns so far. I am saying this because the figure of about 200,000 people killed is not a precise number; it can be higher or lower, it's just a rough estimate.

We also do not know the precise number of refugees or displaced people, those who had to leave their homes. Some of them went to Croatia, Germany, Austria. Some of them came even here to the United States. We don't know the precise number, but it's higher than 1 million. You can assess how large a figure it is for a country which has about 4,300,000 people. So it's clear that there is naked genocide against one people.

At the same time, we have a phenomenon called "urbicide," the symbol which, and the worst example is the town of Sarajevo, which has been under Serbian siege for more than nine months and under constant shelling. It's non-selective shelling of all parts of the town. The town has been almost completely destroyed. All places of worship have been destroyed or damaged. But the 700 mosques in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been completely destroyed, leveled to the ground. The well-known mosque in Foca, which was built 400 years ago, was completely destroyed and leveled to the ground by bulldozers. The large national library of Sarajevo was burned down. The Oriental Institute of Sarajevo, completely destroyed.

Hospitals have been a special target of their attacks, and we will never know why. The former military hospital of Sarajevo, now the French hospital, has been hit 70 times.

And an extremely serious crime was committed against women. You know about the case. And for me it's very difficult to speak about it. It was an organized, systematic, and premeditated crime against women.

That is what is happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina before the eyes of the whole world, at the end of the 20th century, and in the very heart of Europe. That world has done very little, nothing or almost nothing.