

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

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Bosnian Event

THE WHITE HOUSE

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REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
AT THE BOSNIAN HUMANITARIAN EVENT  
THE WHITE HOUSE

MRS. CLINTON: Welcome to the White House for this very significant event that offers so much hope for the people of Bosnia, and indeed for the world, and reflects so well the values of the people of the United States.

You have heard the introductions of those who are here on the podium with me. I would also like to recognize several other people. I could recognize all of you, we could everyone stand, but I want to say a special word of thanks to those members of Congress who are here: Senator Pell from Rhode Island, Senator Levin from Michigan, Congressman Wolf from Virginia, and Congressman Hall from Ohio. I am very grateful that all four of you could be here, representing the United States Congress.

I also want to acknowledge someone else who's with us. Jon Shattuck, the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, who was in Bosnia last week, brought attention to the human rights abuses and atrocities that had occurred there in the previous years, and who has been a very strong voice against, speaking out on behalf of American values, and we thank you very much, Secretary Shattuck.

This gathering represents an extraordinary commitment of religious and non-denominational organizations to humanitarian relief in Bosnia. As a Methodist, I am proud that my own church is one of those involved. Because every day the world bears witness to the terrible legacy of war in the former Yugoslavia.

As you arrived here today, I hope you saw the World Vision exhibit of drawings and photographs by Bosnian children that is on display downstairs. These pictures are at once remarkable, and heartbreaking.

To see the conflict through childrens' eyes reminds us that children bear a special burden in war. Not only are they robbed of their loved ones, of their homes, schools, and communities, they are robbed of their spirit. Today, the children of Bosnia are truly the world's orphans.

Thankfully, the process of reconciliation and rebuilding -- and the process of healing -- has begun. It will not, as all of you know, be an easy task. But it is one of the most important tasks that we can face together on behalf of the people of Bosnia, particularly the children, but also on behalf of ourselves.

When my husband returned from Bosnia earlier this month, he was extremely encouraged by what he had seen there -- not just the presence of NATO peace-keeping forces, but the prospects for peace that the United States helped negotiate in Dayton, which appear to be taking root. Even with the busiest of schedules that one can imagine, during his recent trip to Tuzla, the President met with NGO representatives in Bosnia, all of whom are represented in this room.

I'd like to deviate from the program for just a moment to call on someone who was actually there with the President, who of course made such a contribution to the United States efforts to lead the way to peace, to give you just a first-hand flavor of the President's efforts and reactions in meeting with the representatives of the organizations that are gathered here. So I'd like to call on Assistant Secretary Dick Holbrook. . . .

We all know that a permanent peace will not come easily to a place where neighbors have turned against neighbors and hatreds among different groups have undermined the larger Bosnian community.

The war claimed thousands of lives, and countless people have been brutally victimized because of their ancestry and religion. Like children, women have endured particularly tragic consequences of the conflict in Bosnia. Rape is an ugly fact of war; but in Bosnia, women were purposely branded and violated -- raped as a tactic of war.

Now the people of Bosnia must cope with the scars of that particularly vicious form of physical and emotional violence, and with the children that have been born of rape who are now truly orphaned.

That we can be hopeful at all about the future of Bosnia is in part a measure of the contributions all of your organizations are making on the ground there every day. The process of rebuilding, and healing, would be made much harder without non-governmental organizations and private voluntary organizations working at the grassroots level to provide food, clothing, medicine, and other services to people whose lives have been shattered by war.

Womens groups and organizations have undertaken special efforts to help rape victims begin to rebuild their lives and the

lives of their families.

I think I speak for all Americans when I thank all of you for your ongoing commitments to many important projects. We admire and applaud the talent, energy, skill and resources of all the organizations represented here, because you have all lent a hand to help repair a country and a people so badly in need.

Just as you recognize the work that still remains to be done on many fronts in Bosnia, so does our government. Today I am pleased to announce that, through the United States Agency for International Development and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the United States will support a new relief initiative in Bosnia focusing on families and children.

Our partners in this effort will be the Catholic Relief Services and the International Orthodox Christian Charities. This marks the first time these two important groups have embarked on a project together. Their participation, along with church groups, Islamic associations, local Non-Governmental Organizations, and professional associations is a crucial step in promoting religious reconciliation in Bosnia.

The religious charities are committed to providing relief not simply to one religious group or another, not to one community or another, but to all people in Bosnia who need assistance.

It is this kind of courageous cooperation that must be emulated throughout the region if peace is to hold. CRS and IOCC deserve our thanks and support for pledging to work together on behalf of people of all faiths.

The new initiative that the United States has agreed to support will expand the Psychosocial Trauma Recovery Project that Catholic Relief Services has been operating for one year. The project already has provided skills for para-professionals working in refugee centers in Sarajevo. It has helped psychologists and social workers treat war-related psychological trauma. And it has allowed for the selection and training of 17 professionals who, in turn, will train others in Tuzla and Sarajevo, two areas with large populations suffering the effects of war-related trauma.

It is sometimes easy, for those of us who are not working on the front lines every day as so many of you are, to forget how difficult the process of healing is in a place so ravaged by war and hatred. And it's easy, in the comfort of our own secure lives, to overlook the desperation that greets the people of Bosnia as they go about their daily business.

Imagine, for a moment, what life must be like now for a 13-year-old boy I read about recently. During the war, he had been forced to watch soldiers beat and hang his father, after which they raped his younger sister and mother.

An entire generation of children -- and families -- in Bosnia have been subjected to this kind of emotional and psychological devastation. There is probably no other people in the world, and maybe in the history of the world, who is better equipped than Americans to help bring this kind of support and relief. Americans coming from so many different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, religions, coming together as we do everyday to work here, and now as we are doing it throughout the world, trying to be peacemakers and to demonstrate how the barriers that divide us can be transcended.

So I thank all of you for your efforts to help the people of Bosnia regain some semblance of comfort, security and hope for the future. I thank Catholic Relief Services and the International Orthodox Christian Charities for helping pave the way to reconciliation and rebuild the trust that has been so broken in Bosnia.

And as Americans, we are proud to support and join in these efforts.

There are several people here on the podium who speak for all of you, because of the work that they have been doing and will be undertaking. I'd like to introduce them to you and ask that each of them share with you their own view and that of the organization they represent. . . .

Thank you very much Julia. Thank you Bishop. Thank you very much Chancellor. I also want to say a special word of thanks to Brian Atwood who is the Administrator of the Agency for International Development. And Phyllis Oakley, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau Population, Refugee, and Migration. I think Dick Shifter is here somewhere, I'd like to thank him as well.

This has been not only an ecumenical effort, religious and secular working together, but also many parts of the United States government as well. I am also grateful to the United States Congress for recently passing the Foreign Aid bill. As someone who had never travelled very much before moving into this White House, I've had a chance in the last years to see the results of United States efforts, both through our government and through our charitable, non-governmental, religious, and business efforts around the world.

And it is so clear to me as it is to many of you who are in this work that after rebuilding Europe and Japan at the end of

World War II, after waging a Cold War which was successfully brought to a conclusion on behalf of freedom and democracy and open-market economies, this no time for the United States either privately or publicly to recede from our commitments around the world, but in fact to move even more vigorously from both the private and public perspective. To do all we can to, in Julia's words, help establish civil society. In the words of the IOCC or CRS, to bring about reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing. But on the behalf of the Americans, to recognize how much of a stake we have in what happens in places with names like Bosnia. And you are there, doing that work.

You are putting a human face on what too often looks like a blizzard of images, numbers, claims and rhetoric that comes across our television screens. For that, on behalf of the President, I am grateful. But more than that I think the United States is grateful because you are helping us build the kind of world we always hoped we could take a hand in creating, and what the United States with its ideals, its history, has always stood for. So on behalf of America, thank you all very much and I look forward to greeting each of you individually in the Blue Room. Thank you.

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