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RECORD ID: 9804597
RECEIVED: 23 JUN 98 17

TO: BERGER

FROM: KUPERMAN, ALAN

DOC DATE: 17 JUN 98
SOURCE REF:

KEYWORDS: KOSOVO
NSA CORRESPONDENCE

MEDIA

PERSONS:

SUBJECT: FWDS EDITORIAL RE CRISIS IN KOSOVO

ACTION: NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED

DUE DATE: 04 JUL 98 STATUS: C

STAFF OFFICER: DOWLING

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ACTION DATA SUMMARY REPORT

RECORD ID: 9804597

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CAO ASSIGNED ACTION REQUIRED

Z 98062317 PREPARE MEMO FOR BERGER
X 98062417 NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED

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ACTION: PREPARE MEMO FOR BERGER

DUE DATE: 04 JUL 98 STATUS: S

STAFF OFFICER: NONE

LOGREF:

FILES: WH

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D O C U M E N T D I S T R I B U T I O N

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DOC 1 OF 1

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PRESIDENTIAL/NSA CORRESPONDENCE

IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED

ACTION OFFICER:

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LOG NUMBER:

4597

DUE DATE:

4 Jul

DATE STAFFED:

23 Jun

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO:

☐

PRESIDENT

☒

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

FROM:

LUTERMAN

PREPARE A RESPONSE FOR THE PRESIDENT'S OR NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE WITHIN 10 DAYS. IF A LETTER DOES NOT REQUIRE A RESPONSE, PLEASE RETURN IT TO RECORDS MANAGEMENT (RM 379) WITH THIS FORM, ANNOTATED ACCORDINGLY.



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PLEASE STAFF

June 17, 1998

The Honorable Samuel Berger
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Berger,

As the Administration ponders how best to address the current Kosovo crisis, I hope you will keep in mind the theme of my recent article in *The Washington Post* Outlook section (attached), which highlights the devastation that repeatedly has resulted from the West raising the prospect of military intervention in ethnic conflicts and then not delivering it. In light of the fact that significant such intervention in Serbia is so unlikely, the Administration and its NATO allies should cease threatening it. Such empty threats are not merely ineffective but counter-productive, exacerbating an already tragic situation.

I hope you will spend the time to read this article, and take its message to heart. If you have any questions or comments, I can be reached at the Washington coordinates above.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alan J. Kuperman

Enclosure

JUN 22 17:20

The Washington Post

OUTLOOK

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 1998

False Hope Abroad

Promises to Intervene Often Bring Bloodshed

By ALAN J. KUPERMAN

Because American leaders still do not understand, or perhaps just won't acknowledge, how their earlier actions contributed to ethnic violence in places such as Bosnia, Rwanda and Iraq, they have now inadvertently spurred the start of a round of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, the province of Serbia that is 90 percent ethnic Albanian.

So far, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic has limited his offensive to a swath of the region bordering Albania to inhibit arms smuggling and destroy separatist rebel havens. Full-blown civil war and ethnic cleansing may still be averted but only if U.S. officials finally engage in a cool-headed reassessment of the earlier tragedies and are willing to stand up against the inevitable but shortsighted criticism of Western human-rights advocates. If the Clinton administration charts this brave course, it will realize that the best U.S. policy to help the oppressed Albanians is wholly counterintuitive, requiring us to cease both our rhetorical support for them and our criticism of Milosevic.

In crudest terms, for the good of Kosovo's Muslims, the United States should shut up and stay out of the Serbian conflict.

This prescription is heresy in official Washington and on the nation's editorial pages. The common wisdom, enunciated most frequently by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, holds that inadequate or dilatory U.S. intervention has been responsible for many of the decade's worst humanitarian offenses. The

See INTERVENTION, C2, Col. 1

Alan Kuperman, who is writing his doctoral dissertation at MIT on whether military intervention can stop genocide, begins a fellowship at the Brookings Institution this fall.

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Sometimes, Saying Nothing Is the Best Policy

INTERVENTION, *From C1*

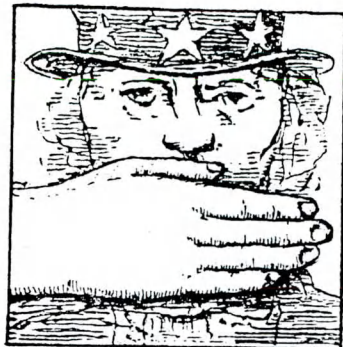
reality is that, more often than not, it has been too much U.S. diplomatic intervention, inadvertently raising the false hope of follow-up military intervention, that has triggered a sequence of events culminating in ethnic cleansing or genocide.

This dynamic has repeated itself so frequently that it's become familiar. First, an oppressive government discriminates against a subordinate group within its borders. Initially, the group does not rise up because it knows that doing so will lead to its slaughter. The group then gets the attention of Western human-rights advocates and the media, who pressure the United States and/or other Western nations to issue warnings to the oppressive government, with hints of further action if it does not relent. The group infers optimistically from this rhetoric that the West will come to its aid if it provokes a violent government crackdown, and therefore escalates its insurgency. The government, realizing that henceforth the group represents a threat to its continued authority, chooses to eliminate the group from the territory through genocide or ethnic cleansing. Westerners, afraid of risking casualties or compromising higher interests, do not deploy troops until violence subsides, promp-

ting the human-rights groups to decry the feeble response. American officials later say they should have intervened sooner.

Several specific cases illustrate the pattern. Iraq's Kurds and Shiites, long embittered by discrimination at the hands of Iraq's Sunni Muslim elite, were not being killed or "cleansed" in the couple of years preceding the U.S.-led 1991 Gulf War, because Saddam Hussein's previous retributive policies and peace with Iran had reduced the threat they posed to the Baghdad regime. After the war, however, President George Bush raised the prospect of U.S. assistance by publicly urging that "the Iraqi people should put Saddam aside." When the Kurds and Shiites tried, and Saddam Hussein predictably ordered his army to crush the uprisings, the Bush administration then declined to deploy force even to shoot down Iraqi helicopter gunships. U.S. officials feared a "quagmire" or Iran pouncing on a weakened Iraq. Only after hundreds of thousands of Kurds were forced to Iraq's northern reaches did Washington intervene with humanitarian aid.

The pattern recurred in the Balkans. Bosnia's Muslims, though unhappy with Serb domination in the Yugoslav federation, were not being killed or cleansed through early 1992, even after Serbia's



BY JANUSZ KAPUSTA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

bloody 1991 war against Croatia. Indeed, Croatia itself had been ravaged only after it directly challenged Serb domination by seceding from Yugoslavia. Bosnia's leaders, correctly assessing that the republic could not defend itself militarily, did not immediately follow Croatia's example.

In January 1992, however, a European Community panel established guidelines for recognizing the independence of Yugoslavia's secessionist republics, prompting Bosnian leaders to believe the West would come to their aid against Serbia. The Bosnians held the required vote and were recognized. In response, Serb forces killed

tens of thousands of Muslims and ethnically cleansed two-thirds of Bosnian territory within months. Not until autumn did the United Nations deploy a sizable peace-keeping force—too late to save most Muslims targeted by the Serbs.

Rwanda's minority Tutsi were disgruntled, both inside the country and outside as refugees, from the moment they lost power at independence in 1962. From 1973 to 1990, however, the Hutu government perpetrated no pogroms in Rwanda, largely because the Tutsi realized they were too weak and vulnerable to challenge the system of institutionalized discrimination. In Uganda, however, longtime Rwandan Tutsi refugees in the army were emboldened by U.S. training and Ugandan support to invade Rwanda in October 1990.

The West continued to side with the rebels at the Arusha peace negotiations of 1992-93, using foreign aid and trade as leverage to compel Rwanda's government to concede on key points, and pledging a multilateral peace-keeping force to guarantee Tutsi security during the transition. This Western tilt emboldened the Tutsi to be uncompromising in their demands, which in turn helped radicalize the Hutu to seek a final solution. Only after the genocide against the Tutsi did the United States intervene to provide humanitarian assis-

tance to refugee camps in neighboring Zaire that ironically harbored perpetrators of the killing. In Rwanda recently, President Clinton declared that "the United States and the world community did not do as much as we could have and should have done."

Quick U.S. intervention could reduce such carnage. But ever since the loss of 18 U.S. soldiers in a firefight in Somalia in October 1993, Americans have been leery of sending troops into ongoing civil wars. Even if an exception were made to stop the genocides, many victims would be dead before such a designation could trigger deployment. The alternative of air power is ineffective as pinpricks and politically difficult when larger air campaigns inevitably kill civilians.

This does not mean that we should never intervene militarily to stop ethnic killing, but rather that we are unlikely to do so until it is too late. Accordingly our diplomatic efforts should focus on preventing the outbreak of ethnic cleansing and genocide in the first place. American officials should do everything they can to avoid transmitting a false message to oppressed groups that we will intervene on their behalf. Once these groups realize they are on

See INTERVENTION, C3, Col. 1

The U.S. Should Rethink Its Policy Toward Kosovo

INTERVENTION, From C2

their own, they are less likely to rise up and be cut down.

In the face of this logic, American officials continue to do harm in Kosovo by sending a mixed message. President Bush first threatened intervention in December 1992. More constructively, the Clinton administration early this year declared firm opposition to Kosovo's independence and characterized the rebel movement as "terrorist." However, Secretary Albright has undermined this stance by declaring that the United States will not "stand by and watch," and NATO did further damage this week by practicing bombing runs. The signal received by Kosovo's rebels encourages them to stir up more trouble and get the Serbs to crack down harder, hoping that the United States will come to the rescue.

Realistically, however, we will not send ground troops into Kosovo, and neither sanctions nor tactical air strikes could halt ethnic cleansing there. Heavier bombing is unlikely in the face of sure Russian opposition at the UN Security Council.

Those who contend the Serbs would never launch an all-out military offensive to assert sovereignty over a region in which they are outnumbered nine-to-one seem to have forgotten the 1991 Serbian offensive

into Croatia, where Serbs represented only 12 percent of the population. Serbians will fight even harder for Kosovo, which they sincerely view as their "Jerusalem," the seat of both their religious and national roots.

While human-rights advocates will decry a policy of restraint as inhumane and contrary to American principles, it might well prevent a civil war in Kosovo and thereby save tens of thousands of lives—the ultimate human right.

Some will contend that we can't just sit back and let genocide happen. But this betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the usual triggers of genocide and ethnic cleansing. These are rarely the result of an irrational leader such as Hitler or Pol Pot, seeking to remake the world in his own perverse mold. Far more often, they are a cold, calculated, "rational" response by a government to a challenge by a subordinate ethnic group. While this may sound like "blame the victim" logic, rebel leaders bear a heavy responsibility for gauging their own strength before launching a violent revolt. More troubling, in each case the West bears some responsibility for having spurred the ultimate victim to rise up.

Others will be concerned such a policy dooms the subordinate groups to perpetual inferior status. But recent events show

that oppressive leaders do not last forever. P.W. Botha in South Africa was followed by F.W. de Klerk and then Nelson Mandela. Gen. Augusto Pinochet in Chile was succeeded by Eduardo Frei. Moreover, governments eventually realize that the positive-sum gains of ethnic cooperation outweigh the zero-sum potential of oppres-

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violence.

sion. Most importantly, while acquiescing to discrimination perpetuates short-run disadvantage, it holds open better futures by keeping a group alive on its home territory.

Squelching our tough talk would not prevent the United States from continuing to serve its most useful human-rights function—a demonstration of toleration in a domestic setting. Ultimately, it is up to downtrodden groups themselves to determine the appropriate means of agitation to advance their cause judiciously—without

provoking a violent crackdown. Salutory examples are the "people power" revolutions in the Philippines and Indonesia.

Obviously, a Western policy of restraint would not avert all ethnic violence—so long as delusional tyrants or risk-prone revolutionaries can arise—but it might have prevented at least three of the worst cases of the decade.

All of which brings us back to Kosovo. Most Kosovars still follow Ibrahim Rugova, the moderate ethnic Albanian leader of Kosovo's self-proclaimed government, who insists on nonviolent tactics but pursues total independence. Other Kosovar Albanians have recently turned to violence, forming the Kosovo Liberation Army. These two groups compete for the hearts and minds of the Kosovar Albanians. Should the rebels prevail, it would appear that further war and ethnic cleansing are inevitable, with conflict potentially spilling over to neighboring states, including Albania and Macedonia.

U.S. and allied efforts need to focus single-mindedly on how to strengthen Kosovar support for Rugova's non-violent tactics, while lowering his aim from independence to autonomy. Foremost, we should make clear that no Western military intervention is forthcoming. The Kosovar Albanians might still choose violence, but then they

would have no one to blame but themselves for the inevitable Serbian backlash. The West, at least, would not again bear responsibility for having falsely raised expectations.

The other constructive step the West could take now is to lift the recently re-imposed sanctions on Serbia, while holding out the prospect of significant diplomatic and economic carrots should Milosevic make concessions toward restoration of regional autonomy. This would reduce the appeal of the Kosovar rebels because they could no longer claim to be hurting Belgrade when their attacks provoke Serbian crackdowns. While the likelihood of Milosevic getting serious about negotiations anytime soon is slim, this strategy at least would give him incentive.

Americans have an inherent tendency to cheer for the little guy who yearns for freedom, while criticizing and threatening the bully. As the world's only superpower, however, this kind of grandstanding can greatly affect the expectations and behavior of oppressed groups seeking our assistance. So long as we remain unwilling to deploy forces effectively, we should stifle our meddling to avoid causing any more harm.