

Save the Children in

On Jan. 29, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, issued this Call To Save the Children in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A listing of initiators of the Call follows the text.

The numbers bespeak terrible cruelty: After almost four years of war, only 37.8 percent of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina are still living there; all the others are dead, missing, driven out, or fled. Ninety percent (90%!) of all workers have no work, only 20 percent of industrial capacity has not been destroyed. A serious perspective for reconstruction and actual economic development is not under political discussion: On the contrary, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund demand, that Bosnia assume 17 percent of the old indebtedness of former Yugoslavia, that is, of the state which continues to conduct genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina down to the present moment!

Yet the most destitute losers in this bestial war are the children. In 1992-95, 10.7 percent of all children and young people from one to nineteen years of age were killed or are missing, i.e., every tenth (!) child has lost its life; every fifth child (!), namely, 19.8 percent, has been wounded; and every sixth child (!), namely, 15.3 percent, has been made an invalid. Further, there are thousands of children who have suffered severe psychophysical injuries.

But what is to become of the children who have survived the war "unhurt," who perhaps have lost one parent, or both? Who have become witnesses to the most horrible human degradation, who have experienced in real life all the bestiality which is otherwise imagined only by the sick minds of Hollywood writers? Today many of these children are not only bodily crippled, but they are traumatized. The experience of atrocities has obliterated their childhood.

We, the representatives of the so-called Western world, cannot make up for the crimes that were inflicted upon the dead of this war. But we have a moral obligation to the children of this war which cannot be dismissed with words, an obligation which stems, not least from the fact that the Western governments have passively witnessed how this war of aggression by Serbs was conducted for geopolitical reasons, with the benefit of abundant support from Thatcher, Bush, Gorbachov, and Mitterrand. For these geopolitical strategists, the people in Bosnia and Croat-

ia were nothing more than figures on the chessboard, who could be sacrificed in order to prevent reunified Germany from playing a crucial role in the economic development of the East.

Today we see the shards of this policy. In particular, the intensification of the situation in Russia, as a result of the so-called reform policy, has led President Clinton to end the war in the Balkans by means of the Dayton peace accords, because otherwise, the threat arises of incalculable strategic dangers. Yet everyone knows, that this peace is no just peace. The victims have consented to it only because, even in this imperfect form, it is preferable to a continuation of the war.

The greatest problem, however, is that bold, large-scale economic reconstruction of the entire Balkans, the only thing which could put forth the basis for a lasting peace, is completely lacking. And unfortunately, without this kind of economic development, it is almost certainly only a question of time, how long this peace can endure.

It is also clear, that the numerous relief organizations, who are performing heroic deeds, are fully overburdened in view of the extent of the destruction. As stated, 90 percent of all workers have no work, and they live on meager state aid, where it is available, or on humanitarian assistance. The lucky ones can ease their lot by means of small-scale dealings in the black market; productive jobs do not exist.

The payments system has altogether collapsed: there are no banks, no accounts, no checks; everything must be paid in cash. The national currency is no longer in general use; most transactions are conducted in German marks or in dollars.

The people want to work, they want to take the daily business of life into their own hands once more, but they lack almost everything. There are practically no streets any more, no highways, no airports; almost all the bridges have been blown up. The hospitals have an enormous deficiency of almost everything: many hundred physicians and specialists are lacking, medical equipment is lacking, medicine is lacking. Rehabilitation clinics for the wounded, and specialized surgery for the many victims with head wounds, are needed. Many schools are destroyed, there are not enough teachers. Farming, too, is in disarray; some of the most

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productive areas are now occupied territory.

The people in Croatia, too, suffer under the same kinds of problems. Industrial production has largely come to a stop; it is below the level of the developing countries. In cities such as Dubrovnik, unemployment is at 70 percent, figures which will rise still further as former students find no work and soldiers are demobilized. Individuals with the bad luck to have worked before the war in Serbia or Slovenia, have no chance to receive unemployment compensation.

The situation of the approximately 180,000 refugees still living in Croatia contributes further to the growing social tensions. For people who have worked their whole lives long, many of the pensions of about 100-250 marks are in doubt. Many of the older people who have lost their houses or dwellings, still sit hopelessly in hotel shelters. Pessimism grows each day.

All of this means that the situation in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia, and thus in the Balkans as a whole, is a powder-keg. The mandate of the IFOR troops is not evident to the population, since up to now, soldiers have proven themselves incapable of protecting civilians or making it possible for refugees to return, and instead arouse the impression of being tricked by the Serbs, just as the UNPROFOR troopers were before them. There is an obvious danger that a desperate population will experience these troops as merely another occupation army, which, moreover, dismisses the systematic attacks of the Serbs as single isolated actions.

All the required elements should now be present in outline, to make the urgent appeal to let no more precious time slip by, and to mobilize the international community to secure the peace by means of a comprehensive economic development program.

The 17 percent of the old Yugoslav debts, whose payment the World Bank has levied upon Bosnia, without Bosnia having even received the ludicrously small outlays now under discussion, must, if paid at all, be paid by Serbia as part of the reparations costs.

Yet above all, the entire region needs an integrated development program which provides the necessary infrastructure for modern industrial and agricultural production. This includes highways, railroads and high-speed railways, energy, water supplies and distribution, canals, and telecommunications.

It would, for example, greatly improve the local population's view of the IFOR troops, if the United States and the Europeans added a further mandate to the present one, namely, that contingents of their respective Army Corps of Engineers actively and energetically assist in reconstruction.

It is urgent that the Western governments make credit lines available for public infrastructure projects, or else national banks in Bosnia and Croatia must themselves be allowed to issue credits for clearly defined productive investments, without the encroachment of any International Monetary Fund conditionalities. This kind of perspective for reconstruction must be launched with the same spiritedness as the reconstruction in Germany after the Second World War.

This appeal is directed in particular to the representatives of the various relief organizations, churches, and committed individuals, who, in the four years since the outbreak of war, have proven by their actions that they have taken to heart the human beings in Bosnia and Croatia. You are hereby called upon, to use your knowledge of the situation, and of the dangers in the Balkans, to win the governments of the United States and Europe to the perspective of economic reconstruction.

The West has brought upon itself the consequences of its sins of omission with regard to the war of aggression in the Balkans. The economic and moral crisis by which the nations of Europe have been seized, for instance, also results from the fact that toleration of genocide and of the ongoing violation of human rights, has undermined the legitimacy of these governments' power.

The least Europe can do for itself, is to make possible an actual future for the children and young people of Bosnia and Croatia.

Initiators: *Dr. Josef Mikloško, former Vice Prime Minister, former Czechoslovakia; Hon. Clare Callan, former U.S. Congressman (D-Neb); Hon. Jeffery Cohelan, former U.S. Congressman (D-Cal); Hon. John G. Dow, former U.S. Congressman (D-NY); Chor-Bishop Elias El-Hayek, Maronite Diocese of Canada; Msgr. Robert P. Hupp, Director Emeritus, Boys Town, Nebraska; Father Richard T. McSorley, S.J., Director, Center for Peace Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.; Amelia Boynton Robinson, Civil Rights leader, vice-chairman, Schiller Institute, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama; Johnny Rodgers, Heisman Trophy winner, Nebraska.*