



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Christopher H. Smith

Ranking Minority Member - Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to everyone here this morning.

Mr. Chairman, our government and the European governments are not actively promoting constitutional reform in Bosnia, and this inaction is partly to blame for rising ethnic tension in Bosnia and the region.

The Dayton Accords were signed 14 years ago. They achieved their purpose in stopping the genocide—they were never meant to do more than this, certainly not to become a permanent constitution. But somehow that has become the question: will Bosnia continue to be governed by the Dayton Accords or a Dayton-like constitution that provides for so-called “entity-voting”? Or will it become a one-person, one-vote democracy?

Bosnia has reached a fork in the road, and it has stopped there. Under Dayton, with its mutual vetoes, neither the Bosnian Serbs, who will accept nothing less than “entity voting”, nor the Bosnian and Croatian advocates of democracy, have the authority to resolve the question.

Mr. Chairman, I believe it is time for our government to exercise real leadership by re-engaging in Bosnia and promoting the only possible solution: a constitution providing for a one-person, one-vote democracy. The current policy, of both the US and the European governments, seems to be, in effect, to tell the Bosnians to simply “work it out” among themselves.

Yet we see very well that, in practice, “work it out yourselves” means that the Serbs prevail, Dayton continues, and separatists continue to stir the pot. In Bosnia, time not on the side of democracy.

The separatist testing of the waters was unmistakable this summer when Srpska Prime Minister Dodik introduced in the Srpska parliament a resolution obliging Srpska officials to oppose constitutional reform. This very month Serbian President Tadić traveled to Bosnia to participate in ceremonies opening a grade school: he did not even inform Bosnian officials of his visit; and the school, named “Serbia,” was in Srpska, on the very hill from which Karadžić’s militias bombarded Sarajevo for three murderous years; Srpska Prime Minister Dodik showed up, and addressed Tadić as “our” president. Worst of all, the international response to this has been muted. We can now be sure that the separatists will increase their troublemaking.

Mr. Chairman, it is very sad to see that the tragically mistaken Balkan policy of the 1990s—the neutrality/ non-engagement policy—has become our current policy. We all hope and believe that this won’t lead to human tragedy on the same scale as the 1990s Serb genocide of the Bosniaks. But in any case our policy should be to provide real leadership toward democratic reform, and to give the Serbs every reason to participate in it—certainly never to encourage separatists.