Press Conference by the Principal Deputy High Representative, Amb. Jacques Paul Klein and Deputy High Representative/ Supervisor for Brcko, Amb. Robert W. Farrand

Robert W. Farrand: Today we have an important visitor from Sarajevo, Jacques Klein, Principal Deputy to High Representative Carlos Westendorp. As many of you know, Ambassador Klein most recently served as Transitional Administrator for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES).

If I may, I would like to say a few brief words about the events of August 28 and their aftermath. It is important that the atmosphere has calmed and that all International Community organizations, including SFOR and UN IPTF, are continuing – indeed, redoubling – their every day tasks.

Last Thursday's events were part of a deliberate, orchestrated plan to discredit the efforts of the International Community, especially SFOR and UN IPTF monitors – by use of violence against them – as they work to implement the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement here in Brcko.

Let me be clear. It was not the good citizens of Brcko who are seen as responsible for this debacle. We have sufficient evidence to prove the involvement of many who do not come from and have no interest in preserving law and order in Brcko.

Many Brcko residents have expressed their disapproval at the

vandalism and mob violence seen on the streets on August 28. People have spoken of being ashamed that others behaved in such a way. They were embarrassed when they found that “their” people took part in such disturbances.

The majority of Brcko citizens played no part in these engineered events and in no way share the aims of those who encourage violence. The pursuit of a government based on fear will not bring to Brcko an environment where economic development can occur, and where the quality of life can improve.

I said on Thursday that I expected calm to continue in the city. I also said I would hold police and municipal authorities personally responsible for any resumption of violence. I emphasize that again.

It has become clear that since August 28, those same authorities that organized the violence, have initiated a campaign of terror against those in the police, the SDS, the political opposition and other people whom they do not consider as loyal. This campaign of terror is to stop immediately. The International Community will keep spotlight of accountability on those authorities.

We, the Office of the High Representative here in Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be deterred from implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement. Our aim is to seek a better future for the people of Brcko and this region.

Jacques Paul Klein: Thank you for coming and for welcoming me. I came here basically to demonstrate the High Representative’s support and the IC’s support for Ambassador Farrand and the outstanding work that he’s done. I don’t think that anyone who knows him and who has worked with him would doubt the fact that he has the interests of the people, all the people, of this region at heart.

As he said, the people of Brcko did not stage the events, they

were orchestrated from elsewhere. We know who the conductors are. And this is the same leadership that has time and again led the same people of this region into cul-de-sacs, not of their own choosing.

Now, the IC, as you know, has a number of objectives here and, even though one is even-handed, we have to say that one will support those who support the democratic process and those who support Dayton and its implementation and those who oppose war criminality and profiteering in general.

I also came here with an open mind after 18 months in Eastern Slavonia. I went there with two goals. One was to integrate Eastern Slavonia into Croatia, which de jure it was, while at the same time protecting the dignity, the lives, and the property of the Serb population that lived there. My attitude has always been that I work with those who constructively work with me. I also have the advantage of having studied the history of the region , so whether it's June 28th 1389, or 1941, or 1991, I know it well enough not to have lectures from other people. I probably objectively know it better, without a taint of fascism, or a taint of nationalism, or what's even worse what I call anecdotal history: "my grandfather told me, my uncle told me", which is generally the worst kind of history.

I have a mandate from my government to try to make this process work. I will do everything I can in my power to make it work. But that also means that there has to be historical reality on the part of all the participants as to what is possible, and that all depends on the way you play the cards in your hand. It means that you don't always win every hand but you win some, if you play your hand intelligently. But by not engaging, which is the major problem I see at the moment, the non-engagement of a senior leadership for which the innocent people pay a price.

I also understand that the physical wounds of war heal much

quicker that the psychological ones and I also know that while we can't forget the past, probably shouldn't forget the past, there's nothing that we can change, the only thing we have any control over now is the future: that is this afternoon, tomorrow and the next day. And what I will try to do is seek out those who want to join me in building a future both economically, democratically for the sake of themselves and their children.

Many of you have traveled in the rest of Europe – the rest of Europe is moving forward. And there's a real danger of having Europe pass us by here unless we constructively engage. That's difficult, it takes reconciliation, it takes forgiveness. It also takes identifying who the real culprits, and perpetrators were. I have never identified a given people as perpetrators or war criminals because indeed there were some on all sides, as there are in every war, and it's time we began identifying the specific individual who was the war criminal and stopped demonising or satanising a given people. Also mutual accusations don't necessarily work very well. There's an old Balkan proverb that says each neighbour is responsible for leashing his own dog. Its time that all the sides did that.

I would just say a word to you as the press because you can be very useful in this process or you can be very destructive, if you let your political prejudices, the dictates of your editors, or your political leadership decide what it is you print and write and what kind of slant you give to a story. What you do and what you print can hurt, and in the final analysis it can even kill. You will have to live with that. At the same time you can be a constructive agent of decency and progress and goodness . That is a decision each of you will have to make, often under enormous pressure, but I appeal to your human decency and ask you to forget your politics and origins and actually help print the truth. Because quite often, with the press I even had in Vukovar, it could be compared to science fantasy rather than media press as we know

it in the West. So you have an obligation, I guess, to print the truth and to support people like Ambassador Farrand, who have no personal agenda. The only agenda he has, and indeed OHR and the international community has, is to try to heal the wounds and try to build for the people of the region a better future, and that can only be done with their cooperation and your cooperation.

Now tomorrow I'm going to Belgrade to see President Milosevic. I did that on a regular basis when I was in Vukovar, both with Tudjman and Milosevic. And obviously some of the incidents that have occurred here are topics that I will be going to take up with him. Thank you.

SRNA– would like a specific answer by either Mr. Klein or Mr Farrand on who specifically ordered the occupation of the Centre for Public Security in Brcko on Thursday night.

Robert.W. Farrand: There was no occupation ordered of the Public Security Centre in Brcko on Thursday.

SRNA: What do you call the barbed wire ?

Robert W. Farrand: There is a requirement on the part of the International Police Task Force to look after theÖto inspect weapons and such things in the police of Brcko and other cities in the RS and in the Federation and they were carrying out that. But that's quite a different thing from the way that you have phrased your question.

SRNA: They have never inspected with barbed wire, tanks and helicopters. Be a little more specific, we were all present.

Robert W. Farrand: The SFOR has responsibility for area security, and they shall make the judgement, and they were carrying out their actions based on their judgment of what the security situation required.

Q:You have said, General Klein, that you would do whatever is

possible to achieve here. What do you consider ? What is your goal and what do you consider ?

Jacques Paul Klein: That goal is to re-establish the multi-ethnic framework of the society that existed before this debacle started. I blame the leadership for the debacle, not the people. The sad part is, I would ask you all sometime to go back to the library, and look at the 1913 Carnegie Endowment report on the wars of the Balkans. And it says basically, let's not blame the poor people of the world, for the myopia of nationalism and excesses of their leaders, where religion is often a function of politics rather than ethics or morality etc etc. It's well worth reading.

Q: How do you explain, given the tense situation, the programme which was aired by the local radio station ? How do you estimate that ?

Robert W. Farrand: We're very, very disturbed, and very disappointed and very outraged, actually, of the quality of the radio reporting that went on during the day. We have a series of quotes from the radio during the course of the day that I have got a record of, and we are looking at this matter very closely.

Q: It seems you had, Gen Klein, a rather successful mission in Eastern Slavonia. It also seems that your mission here might be more difficult in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What could make it more difficult ?

Jacques Paul Klein: Well as you know, in Eastern Slavonia we basically had an agreement that there was no doubt that it was part of Croatia de jure. The goal then was to negotiate a package for the Serb population that would protect their lives, property, dignity, for the long term, with the understanding that they would be Croatian citizens. Now Croatia has the possibility in the next two or three years of taking off economically. I think that many Serbs in Eastern

Slavonia looked at both sides of the Danube and let economics dictate their decision, that there was a greater future in being part of Europe by being on this side of the Danube than the other side. We also negotiated, with each contract, PTT and HPT integration, Electric Krajina integration, with Nik integration, with INA, specific jobs for the population locally, by that means we knew who the deputy postmaster in Ilok was going to be and negotiated that and had an agreement with the Croats to agree to that.

We also tried to find ways to bring people together. When we opened the Vukovar-Osijek highway on Saturday morning, just as a place for people to be, in the course of a year, of a year and a half altogether, over a 180,000 people met on that road on Saturday morning without incident, which showed me that the people at the base level are much more willing to accommodate themselves to a future than their leadership was. That happened without an incident by the way, and I worried every Saturday that one idiot might bring a hand grenade and do something stupid but it didn't happen.

When that worked we started the sponsorship programme, where I could bring you to Osijek or you could bring me to Beli Manastir. We started a day at a time and then eventually opened it up and made it open-ended. 80,000 people have done that, without an incident, in spite of hard-line HDZ, in spite of some Serb extremists, in spite if all those things. Most people said we want to get the past behind us and move on with our lives.

Q: How do you justify, according to which convention, Rome, Paris, Geneva, the taking over of the Serb transmitters ?

Jacques Paul Klein: What transmitters ?

Q: Kozara, Udrigovo …

Jacques Paul Klein: When a transmitter broadcasts propaganda, hate, the kind of political question you're asking me shows

that you're part of the problem and not part of the solution. That's the dilemma with transmitters like that. And if there is a transmitter like that I will close it down and I will have no qualms about closing it down at any given point in time. And I don't need any other convention than violation of human rights. Propaganda is propaganda and you know what propaganda is and so do I, you know what hate is and so do I, and when it's on the air it's totally undeserved.

I don't think that any international court presented with the evidence that was broadcast would object in the least to us closing that down – if it was closed down which you know it wasn't.

Q: After the falling apart of the former Yugoslavia, do you consider it possible to have a reintegrated multi-ethnic Bosnia ?

Jacques Paul Klein: That's the first question I asked when I got here. Are there enough decent people, on all three sides, who in spite of all the egregious things that have happened, are still willing to live together? My sense is there are. That's from talking to average people. What they ask of us is to get rid of the war criminals, on all sides, clean out the war profiteers, the gangsters, the mafiosa that builds up in any war climate, because how can you ask a doctor, or a lawyer, or a school teacher or a newsman, to take part in civic activity if the thugs and the murderers who perpetrated many of these things are still there. That should be one of the highest priorities of the International Community. And as for your question I think that there are enough people. But you can also help guide that perception and that reality by what you print and what you write.

Q: You've linked certain historical events, you've mentioned 1389, 1991 and this year. Would you care to explain how they are similar, would you care to elaborate on 1913, because we know the relationship that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had

toward the Serb people, does that reflect something of your own politics ?

Jacques Paul Klein: Let me put it to you this way: I come from a region in Europe where we had six changes of nationality in the past 330 years. And not only change of nationality but it meant change of language and I assure you that change or difference in language and culture between France and Latin culture and German and Germanic culture and literature is one hell of a lot greater than between Serbo-Croat, or Muslim. That means in WWI I had grandfathers and uncles fighting on the German and on the French side.

But the point is, after 350 years since the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, when Kohl and Mitterand went to Verdun together they asked themselves why did 700,000 of our best young people die here? And they didn't have an answer. Was it realism ? Was it nationalism ? Was it economic ? Was it an accident of history ? Was it flawed leadership ? But they said for whatever reason, we have to make sure that at least between France and Germany this never happens again. And the leadership in both those countries has done everything possible to build the institution of Europe, basically the Europe of Charlemagne. That can be done elsewhere. It is not easy to overcome those wounds of war: my uncle spent WWII in a German concentration camp for anti-fascist activities. Now it's very hard for his children to accept the reality of this rapprochement with Germany. But at some point you have to do that, to get over the past, otherwise you keep repeating it, generation after generation, to what end ?

Q: You keep talking about multi-ethnic Europe, Western Europe, the country where you come from. Why did your country allow for my country to be broken up ? Why am I now an apartheid? Why do I not have citizenship ? You keep talking about Western Europe. So why ?

Jacques Paul Klein: Western Europe didn't break up Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia broke up Yugoslavia. So let’s not blame Western Europe.

Q: I would say they did.

Jacques Paul Klein: But we, as an Alsatian people, managed to exist in France. If you ever look at Belgian money, Belgian money is in Belgian francs and Flemish francs and in German Francs and, even though Belgium has fought two wars with Germany, there is a small German minority in Belgium whose dignity the Belgian government respects enough to put German on their currency. And there are many examples like that in Europe …If people can’t live together what is the other option ?

Q: To divide.

Jacques Paul Klein: You’re about 100 years behind European thinking. You need to catch up. Europe is uniting not dividing.

Q: Yes, they first divided then united.

Q: You called the events, the people that were manipulated “a mindless mass”. (Jacques Paul Klein: I did not call them a mindless mass.) Could you please be specific and say which institution guided them into this ?

Jacques Paul Klein: What Ambassador Farrand says was we had an orchestrated group that was brought, what we in English, I believe, call “rent-a-crowd”. Thugs that can be paid 100 DM to go anywhere, to do anything, but which the decent people of this town reject and that’s what gives me hope: the private phone calls to him, and the messages that he had, saying this is not us nor does it reflect us. But unfortunately they are still intimidated.

Q: I think Mr Klein’s thinking is very interesting for the people who live here, so I would like to extend an invitation

to be our guest on the air in Radio Brcko.

Jacques Paul Klein:I will be. As soon as I get my own helicopter you’re going to see me all over this place.

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