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ACTION EUR-01

INFO LOG-00 AID-01 CIAE-00 C-01 OASY-00 DODE-00 HA-09
H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-19 L-03 ADS-00 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0666
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 06626

GENEVA FOR USDEL ICFY

ZAGREB FOR AMBASSADOR BARTHOLOMEW

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PREL, BK, SR, UK
SUBJECT: THATCHER RIPS WEST FOR INACTION IN
FACE OF SERB MASSACRES IN BOSNIA

SUMMARY

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1. IN APRIL 13 TELEVISION APPEARANCES ON BBC AND ITN,
BARONESS THATCHER SAVAGED EC AND WESTERN INACTION OVER
BOSNIA, CHARGING THE WEST WITH BEING LIKE "AN ACCOMPLICE
TO MASSACRE." SHE CALLED FOR ARMING THE BOSNIAN MUSLIMS
AND SUGGESTED AIR STRIKES AGAINST THE SERBS. THE INTER-
VIEWS, WHICH RECEIVED FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE APRIL 14, HAVE
REFIRED THE PUBLIC DEBATE OVER BOSNIA AND REPRESENT THE
FORMER PRIME MINISTER'S STARKEST ATTACK ON HER SUCCESSOR.
THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, BRUSHED ASIDE THE CRITICISMS.

DL 2/1/98

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DO NOT SEE GROWING PUBLIC OUTRAGE TRANSLATING INTO
SUPPORT FOR GREATER BRITISH MILITARY INVOLVEMENT.
END SUMMARY.

THATCHER OPENS FIRE

2. WITH APRIL 13 TV NEWS FULL OF REPORTS OF THE SERB SHELLING OF SREBRENICA THE PREVIOUS DAY (INCLUDING PICTURES OF WOUNDED CHILDREN BEING EVACUATED TO TUZLA), BARONESS THATCHER SOLICITED INTERVIEWS TO MAKE HER VIEWS PLAIN. VISIBLY SHAKING WITH FURY, SHE SAID:

"WE CANNOT GO ON WITH THIS POLICY -- NAMELY FEEDING PEOPLE BUT LEAVING THEM TO BE MASSACRED..."

ASKED WHAT THE WEST SHOULD DO: "TWO POSSIBLE OPTIONS. THE FIRST: TO SEE THAT THE BOSNIAN MUSLIMS ARE ARMED... (THE SECOND) ...ALSO TO GIVE THEM FULL AIR COVER IF NEED BE, WITH GROUND ATTACK."

ASKED ABOUT FOREIGN SECRETARY HURD'S COMMENT THAT
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ARMING THE MUSLIMS WOULD MERELY PROVIDE A LEVEL KILLING FIELD: "I THOUGHT IT WAS A TERRIBLE AND DISGRACEFUL PHRASE. THERE'S A KILLING FIELD NOW WHERE THE INNOCENT HAVEN'T THE REQUISITE ARMS PROPERLY TO DEFEND THEMSELVES..."

THE INACTION WAS "NOT WORTHY OF EUROPE, NOT WORTHY OF THE WEST, AND NOT WORTHY OF THE UNITED STATES."

"I AM ASHAMED OF THE EC, THAT THIS IS HAPPENING IN THE HEART OF EUROPE... THERE IS NO CONSCIENCE. WE HAVE BEEN A LITTLE LIKE AN ACCOMPLICE TO MASSACRE. WE CANNOT CARRY ON LIKE THAT."

3. WHILE THATCHER HAS LONG ADVOCATED MORE FORCEFUL ACTION ON BOSNIA, HER APRIL 13 INTERVIEWS WERE HER SHARPEST ATTACKS YET ON UK AND WESTERN POLICY, AS WELL AS THE MOST OUTSPOKEN CRITICISM SHE HAS VOICED TO DATE OF HER SUCCESSOR'S GOVERNMENT. HER COMMENTS RECEIVED HEAVY PLAY ON THE APRIL 13 TELEVISION NEWS AND GOT BROAD FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE APRIL 14 (FULL REPORT IN POST DAILY MEDIA REACTION REPORT -- SEE LONDON 6613).

GOVERNMENT DISMISSES CRITICISM

4. DEFENSE SECRETARY RIFKIND TERMED THATCHER'S
OUTBURST "EMOTIONAL NONSENSE." WHILE OTHER GOVERNMENT
SPOKESPERSONS WERE NOT SO BLUNT, THEY MADE CLEAR HMG
POLICY WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED.

5. THE LABOR PARTY DID NOT ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH
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THATCHER'S CRITICISM BUT SAID IT WOULD DEMAND A
STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON WHAT IT CALLED A
COLLAPSE OF THE UN EFFORT IN BOSNIA. LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
LEADER PADDY ASHDOWN CONTINUED TO ADVOCATE A TOUGHER
LINE ON BOSNIA, STATING THAT:

"IF THE UN IS NOT PREPARED TO DRAW A LINE AND SAY
'YOU WON'T GO FURTHER,' THEN WE WILL SEE THE

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ANNIHILATION OF THE MUSLIM STATE."
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HOWELL LETTER

6. DAVID HOWELL, CONSERVATIVE MP AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MEANWHILE CONTINUED HIS CONVERSION TO A HARDER LINE ON BOSNIA. IN A LETTER TO THE APRIL 14 "TIMES," HOWELL WROTE:

"WHAT I DO NOW URGE IS THAT 'SPECIFIC AND CAREFULLY JUDGED MILITARY ACTION' (LORD OWEN'S WORDS) IS AT THIS STAGE USED TO BLUNT AND DETER FURTHER SERBIAN EXPANSIONISM -- THE KEY DESTABILIZER -- AND CREATE THE MINIMUM CONDITIONS IN WHICH PARLAYING ABOUT TERRITORY CAN BEGIN AND PEACEKEEPING CONCEIVABLY WORK."

"REFUSAL TO ACT MORE DECISIVELY NOW GUARANTEES BEING DRAGGED IN ON EVEN MORE IMPOSSIBLE TERMS LATER..."

COMMENT

7. THE LATEST TV PICTURES FROM BOSNIA AND THATCHER'S SCORCHING ATTACKS HAVE REFIRED PUBLIC DEBATE HERE ON WHAT THE WEST SHOULD DO. BUT, WHILE OUTRAGE ABOUT SERB ATROCITIES IS ON THE UPSWING, WE DO NOT SEE WIDESPREAD

PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT -- EITHER FROM THE PUBLIC OR PARLIAMENT -- TO TAKE MORE FORCEFUL ACTION THAT WOULD PUT BRITISH TROOPS AT RISK.

8. AS "TIMES" COLUMNIST PETER RIDDELL PUT IT:

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"BARONESS THATCHER'S INTERVENTION MAY STIR THE DEBATE IN BRITAIN OUT OF ITS CURRENT HAND-WRINGING IMPOTENCE, BUT, IN THE END, WHAT MATTERS IS WHETHER THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION IS PREPARED TO COMMIT AMERICAN FORCES ON A LARGE SCALE. WASHINGTON HAS TO GIVE A LEAD."

DEAL

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