

## Balkan refugee scene a grim musical chairs game

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Like a dark game of musical chairs played to the sound of artillery fire, Catholic Croat and Orthodox Serb refugees displaced each other as the war in the Balkans continued to spread destruction across the landscape.

Recently thousands of Catholic Croats, following a victorious Croat army, returned to a strip of land they had fled along Croatia's southern border with Bosnia-Herzegovina which rebel ethnic Serbs had proclaimed as the Republic of Krajina.

As Catholics returned home, ethnic Serbs fled in huge numbers from the area to ultimately replace Croat civilians elsewhere in Serb-controlled territory.

A Croatian military blitz in early August regained a huge swath of Serb-held territory and added measurably to the growing number of displaced people in the former Yugoslavia.

Shortly after the Croatian victory, a wave of Serb refugees, estimated as high as 200,000, began traveling on foot, in bullet-shattered cars and horse-drawn

carts to Serbia or Serb-controlled regions in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The scenes were reminiscent of earlier movements that saw Croat and Muslim refugees fleeing Serb victors. Many of the fleeing Serbs were even heading for Bosnian places abandoned by Croats several years earlier, after the region fell under Serb control.

Croatia's military retaking of Serb-held territory opened the way for the return of 100,000 Catholics and the resumption of normal parish life, said the Croatian bishops.

But initial inspection of the area by church officials shows widespread destruction of church and personal property, requiring a massive rebuilding effort, said an Aug. 8 statement issued by the permanent council of the bishops' conference.

The statement also asked Serbs fleeing the area to return.

"We support the statements and attempts by the Croatian authorities that urge the citizens of Serbian nationality to remain in their homes, where they are



RNS/Reuters  
A Serbian refugee girl Aug. 12 stands inside a sports complex being used to house refugees in Belgrade.

guaranteed personal and civil safety as well as the inviolability of their property," said the bishops' statement.

"We express the hope that this guarantee will be fulfilled in its entirety for those who remained and that it will inspire the return of at least those who are not persecuted by feelings of guilt," it added.

The bishops' statement said that many Serbs "did not make the decision themselves to abandon their homes."

They were encouraged to leave by Serbian military and Serbian Orthodox religious leaders, it said. The statement said that there were 160,000 Serbs in the area, according to a 1991 census.

Thousands of Croatian Catholics and other non-Serbs were being expelled from Serbian-held northern Bosnia-Herzegovina to make room for the Serbian refugees from Croatia, said Bishop Franjo Komarica of Banja Luka.

Prior to the current wave of expulsions, 75 percent of the 60,000 Catholic Croats "left their ancestral homes under duress," he said.

## Pro-life activists laud switch of 'Jane Roe' on abortion

### Diocese: Move is only a 'first step'

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Many in the pro-life movement hailed the announcement by Norma McCorvey, the "Jane Roe" in the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court abortion case, that she was switching to the pro-life cause.

The switch was not total; McCorvey, now 47, said in one interview that she still supported the right to a first-trimester abortion, particularly in cases of fetal deformity.

ABC News Aug. 10 broke the story of McCorvey's Aug. 8 baptism as a born-again Christian by Operation Rescue director Rev. Flip Benham and her renunciation of the abortion-rights movement. Immediately, pro-life leaders cheered, while abortion-rights supporters tried to minimize her defection's importance.

"We are heartened by Norma McCorvey's reconsideration of her position on abortion," said Gail Quinn, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, in a statement.

"Today Norma McCorvey dispelled the myth that abortion liberates women," said Serrin Foster, Feminists for Life of America executive director.

"Her acknowledgement of emotional distress over abortion is the first wave in

the turning tide of sentiment among women who realize that the toll abortion exacts on women's lives is simply too high," Foster said in a statement.

McCorvey told ABC, "I think abortion is wrong. I think what I did was wrong. And I just had to take a pro-life position on choice."

She added she was haunted by seeing empty swings on a playground.

"They were swinging back and forth but they were all empty and I just totally lost it," McCorvey said. "And I thought, oh my God, the playgrounds are empty because there's no children because they've all been aborted."

"As America begins to recognize the tragic error of abortion on demand, it is extremely heartening to see that McCorvey is coming to the same realization," said a statement by spokeswoman

Michele Arocha Allen of the National Right to Life Committee.

"In spirit and in prayer, we are with her and all others who are moving away from the culture of death and toward a greater realization of the sanctity of life," said a statement by Catholic Campaign for America's executive director, Michael Ferguson.

Suzanne Schnittman, Consistent Life Ethic coordinator for the Rochester diocese, said she embraces McCorvey's "de-

cision to change her posture on abortion" but that because "she makes exceptions for abortion during the first three months of life, I see her statement as a first step."

"The diocese welcomes any change of heart that protects life," Schnittman said. "With this decision McCorvey joins thousands of women and men who feel they can no longer condone the policy supported by *Roe v. Wade*, which allows abortion up to the full nine months."



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