

New Serbian power bid pushes Yugoslavia to the breaking point

by Konstantin George

A Soviet-backed Serbian power play has moved into its decisive phase in Yugoslavia. The latest round began with an eruption by Albanian residents of the autonomous region of Kosovo on Nov. 18, provoked by a Serbian ultimatum to the region's Albanian leadership to resign. Kosovo, while nominally part of Serbia, has near total autonomy. The following day, 1,300,000 Serbian nationalists rallied in the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade.

The crucial event that set off the Serbian power play was generally ignored by Western newspapers. That was the Nov. 13-16 visit to Yugoslavia by Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov. The visit served to implement an autumn decision taken in Moscow to fish in the troubled waters of the Yugoslav crisis, by openly supporting the Serbian Communist leaders and the Serbian leadership of the Yugoslav Armed Forces. It was that decision by Moscow which moved up the timetable in the crisis, to where the point of no return in ethnic conflict had already been crossed in mid-November.

Kremlin tilts toward the Serbs

The signal that Moscow had decided to intervene to tilt the Yugoslav power balance in Russia's favor, was given in an article that appeared Oct. 30 in the Soviet Defense Ministry daily, *Krasnaya Zvezda*. The article signaled loud and clear that Moscow was ready to back Serbia and the Serbian-run Yugoslav military. It denounced "Albanian nationalism and separatism," as responsible for the Kosovo crisis, supported the September "mass demonstrations" by Serbians in the autonomous region of the Vojvodina (which has a mixed population of Serbs and Hungarians), and noted favorably how they had forced the resignation of the Vojvodina leadership. *Krasnaya Zvezda* charged that there was a campaign to "destabilize" and "defame" the Yugoslav Armed Forces, a clear reference to the leadership in the western Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia, which have voiced their concern that the Armed Forces are planning a Serbian coup d'état.

Soviet coverage of the Yugoslav Central Committee

Plenum of Oct. 17-18 focused on the "crucial contributions" made by "the speakers from the leadership of the Armed Forces"—all Serbian—who were then listed by name.

Then, on Nov. 10, came the sudden announcement from Moscow that Yazov, who less than a month before had spent five days in neighboring Bulgaria, would arrive in Yugoslavia "during the first half of November." Three days later, he was there. The visit featured lengthy talks with the Serbian brass in the Army, following which the Serbian League of Communists issued its ultimatum to the Albanian party leadership in Kosovo to resign, and announced that the long-postponed Serbian rally in Belgrade would go ahead on Nov. 19. The rally has become the springboard for launching the decisive phase of Serbian party leader Slobodan Milosevic's drive for power.

Milosevic's demagoguery

With the backdrop of the Nov. 18 Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo, the first such eruption since 1981, Milosevic delivered a Mussolini-style tirade of chauvinist demagoguery, addressing the crowd of 1,300,000 people, who roared their approval and applauded thunderously after each sentence:

"There is as yet no order in Kosovo, but this is not the time for regret, but the time to fight. We will fight for Kosovo until final victory. . . . No power in the world can stop Serbia in the struggle to attain its unity. . . . The Serbian people can lead and win a fight for freedom. . . . We'll win the fight for Kosovo, in spite of any resistance against us, whether from within our country, or from abroad. . . . We're not afraid. We'll start any fight, and we know that we're going to win it. This leadership has no other choice. Either it places itself at the head of the people, or it will be swept away in time."

Two days later, Nov. 21, the Serbian Party Conference opened, with a keynote speech by Milosevic, who demanded the imprisonment of "the leaders of the [Albanian] counter-revolution in Kosovo. . . . Those really responsible for the genocide and terror in Kosovo should go to jail." Referring to the numerous Albanian youths jailed since 1981 for sepa-

ratism, Milosevic added: "Mostly children have paid the price, and not those who led the counterrevolution." He underscored that solving the Kosovo crisis "has absolute priority," along with constitutional changes "without delay" that would give Serbia direct rule over Kosovo.

The Serbian Party Conference concluded with a demand that an extraordinary Federal Party Congress be convened soon, to ratify constitutional changes giving Serbia direct rule over Kosovo and Vojvodina, and increasing central—read, Serbian—power, at the expense of the other republics, notably Slovenia and Croatia. The Serbians are also demanding that the extraordinary Party Congress conduct a purge of non-Serbian party leaders and institute "drastic cuts" in the federal party bureaucracy.

The ethnic tinderbox

In Kosovo itself, tensions have been rising each day since Nov. 18. The ban imposed on Albanian demonstrations by the nine-member Yugoslav Federal State Presidium, first on Nov. 20, was ignored for three days by the Albanian inhabitants of the region, before finally, on Nov. 23, a temporary and deceptive "lull" set in.

Only a miracle has prevented violent clashes between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, so far. For example, Nov. 21, a core group of 4,000 Albanian workers marched some 45 miles to Kosovo's capital, Pristina, to protest the forced resignation of the local Albanian party leadership. In Pristina, they were joined by thousands of others and all marched through the Serbian suburb of Kosovo, Polje. Only a heavy police escort prevented otherwise certain violence.

The ethnic conflict is now spreading. On Nov. 22, at least 15,000 Slovenians demonstrated in their capital of Ljubljana, to protest the constitutional changes Serbia is demanding. In Croatia, Yugoslavia's other western republic, the leading daily *Vjesnik*, on the same day, carried a front-page editorial blasting Serbia for wanting "to force others to bend to its will," and asked: "With what right are the demands coming out of Serbia for the resignation of numerous political leaders in other regions?" Serbia was accused of a "double standard" in praising Serbian rallies, while condemning Albanians who demonstrate as engaged in "subversive political demonstrations." *Vjesnik* concluded by noting that "it is almost as if with regret" that the Serbian press mentions that "so far" no violence has occurred during the Albanian demonstrations.

The lack of bloodshed will not last for long. The key to propelling Milosevic further on the road to power, and thus bringing Yugoslavia to the point of open fragmentation, lies in setting up violent incidents in Kosovo. Moscow has many assets among the extremist nationalists, both Albanian and Serbian, and can be expected to employ them to effect the next turning point in Russia's favor. The Serbian drive is but a prelude; the real power play is Moscow's open bid to dominate the entire Balkan peninsula, by sometime during 1989 at the latest.

Thatcher aborts royal plot with Kremlin

by Mark Burdman

Over the Nov. 18-20 weekend, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's office at 10 Downing Street took some preemptive measures against a nasty deal shaping up between the Kremlin and Buckingham Palace.

In the days prior, the Kremlin had caused a report to be circulated in the British press, that Mikhail Gorbachov, during his Dec. 12-14 visit to London, would be bringing with him an invitation for Queen Elizabeth II to visit Moscow. This invitation would be extended, at a Dec. 14 meeting between Gorbachov and the Queen at Buckingham Palace, according to the reports leaked by the Kremlin to chosen British conduits.

But on Nov. 18, in a background press briefing, an aide to Mrs. Thatcher let it be known that the British prime minister would advise against any royal family visit to the Soviet Union. Since, under British constitutional arrangements, the monarchy is bound to remain out of political affairs, such counsel from the prime minister would amount to an effective veto, unless the Palace were prepared to initiate a confrontation that could rapidly escalate into a constitutional crisis.

Reporting this story, the Nov. 20 *Sunday Times* of London commented that the Soviets had leaked the story of the invitation to the Windsors "to test British reaction before a formal invitation was issued. . . . The Kremlin has had its answer in unmistakable terms with this preemptive veto."

Against the 'Russian party'

The pretext cited for 10 Downing Street's decision is that it would be inappropriate for the Queen to visit a Bolshevik regime, since the Bolsheviks murdered leading members of the Romanov dynasty, who were relatives of the House of Windsor in Britain. This, in and of itself, would hardly be an insurmountable obstacle. As British newspapers pointed out, King George V himself took measures to prevent safe exile for his cousin, Czar Nicholas II, and was, to some extent, complicit in the deaths of the Romanovs.

If that fact only hints at high-level British Establishment support for the Bolsheviks, it points to the core issue behind