

Communism's demise sets off explosion in Yugoslavia

by Marco Fanini and Konstantin George

In Yugoslavia, one dramatic turn of events is coming after another. While everyone was waiting for the clash between Serbia on the one side and Croatia and Slovenia on the other, instead what broke out was a revolt by some Serbs against other Serbs. The rebels, headed up by the leader of the Party for Serbian Rebirth, Vuk Draskovic, but supported by all the other opposition parties, took to the streets against Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milosevic. Ferocious clashes broke out with the police, resulting in several wounded and dead, and tanks were sent into the streets of Belgrade, but finally the opposition won: The heads of the state-owned television channel and the main newspapers were forced to step down, under charges that they were not impartial; the Internal Affairs Ministry was censured for having ordered the bloody repression; and Vuk Draskovic was released after being imprisoned.

The strongman Milosevic, in a word, suddenly finds himself with his own head on the chopping block.

Throughout the Balkans, just as in the Soviet Union, the collapse of communism is intensifying the already-existing fissures along ethnic lines. This is occurring under conditions of economic breakdown crisis, further fueling the ethnic explosions.

In Serbia, the Armed Forces intervened directly into the political scene by convening an emergency meeting of the Office of the Presidency of the Yugoslav Republic, in which all six federated republics are supposed to be represented. Slovenia and Croatia refused the invitation, pointing to the fact that the decision to send tanks into Belgrade had not been taken collectively, according to the Constitution, but by Serbian President Milosevic on his own. Belgrade is therefore not a safe city, they said. Who can assure us that once we are there for the meeting of the Office of the Presidency

you won't pull off a coup?

So they proposed that the meeting take place in "neutral" territory, i.e., not in Serbia. The proposal was not even considered by the Serbs, and so there is a stalemate and a serious risk of a military coup d'état.

Playing for time

Croatia and Slovenia are seeking any pretext to stall until May 15, when the presidency of Yugoslavia will go from Serbia to Croatia, under the rotation system among the six constituent republics. The Croatian Stipe Mesic would then also become supreme commander of the Yugoslav Armed Forces, and a coup d'état, although still possible, would become more difficult. So the coup faction—i.e., the Serbian communists led by Milosevic and by the Armed Forces who largely follow him—have the greatest interest in speeding up the timetable for their projected military intervention.

As the conflict intensified, the Serbian state-controlled media ran a no-holds-barred hate campaign against Croatia, with wild claims of "mass repression" of Serbs in Croatia and "mass flight" of Serbian refugees from Croatia.

But unlike Milosevic and his cronies in the Belgrade leadership, Draskovic and the Serbian opposition consider—with good reason—that any flight forward to achieve a "Greater Serbia" by May 15 would backfire, with Serbia becoming the loser. Hence they demanded—and achieved—the curbing of the anti-Croatian media barrage, and the purging of the Serbian media bosses.

The pressure on Croatia can be seen by the incidents which took place in the Croatian town of Pakrac in the first days of March: The local Serbian community, weapons in hand, had started a rebellion, which was forcefully repressed by Croatian police. The police crackdown in turn brought

on the intervention of the tanks of the Armed Forces, who interposed themselves between Serbs and Croatian police as “peacekeepers.” Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, when he realized how the trap had been sprung, fired his deputy internal affairs minister and four other ministers for having misdirected the Croatian police.

Splits and more splits

Yugoslavia’s two northern republics, Slovenia and Croatia—and it seems that Bosnia Herzegovina wants to go with them, too—want to immediately join the Western economic system by entering the European Community. Serbia, on the other hand, remains loyal to socialism, and would like to do anything possible to stop the northern republics from seceding, or, failing that, to rebuild Greater Serbia by taking away from those republics large chunks of territory by backing the claims of numerous Serbian communities that live in those territories.

The Slovenes and Croats are mainly of the Catholic faith and culturally close to Western Europe, because they formerly belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Serbs, on the other hand, are Slavs of the Orthodox creed, dependent on the Moscow Patriarchate, and fundamentally anti-Western.

One prejudice that needs to be eliminated in analyzing current history in Yugoslavia, is that Croats are all fascist “Ustashi” and anti-democratic—as Milosevic’s “Greater Serbia” propaganda machine alleges. As is well known, a part of the Ustashi (the Croatian national movement; “Ustashi” means “Arise!”) reentered the country alongside the Fascist and Nazi troops and fought against Josip Broz Tito’s partisans during World War II, committing unspeakable crimes of genocide. Yet many Croats sided with Tito, many remained neutral, and a good many others preferred to emigrate. A case in point is the present leader of the nationalist party, Hvraska Democraska Zadienica, the President of the Croatian Republica, Franjo Tudjman. He was one of Tito’s partisan generals.

An economic disaster

The economic crisis in Serbia has produced a deep split in the elites: On the one hand, Milosevic is both a Stalinist communist and a theoretician of the nationalist dream of Greater Serbia; on the other hand, Vuk Draskovic is a monarchist and anti-communist, but likewise a Serbian nationalist and an enemy of Western ideas. The economic crisis has wiped out much of the charismatic aura around Milosevic, and neither he nor Draskovic has the slightest idea of what to do to revive the economy.

As for Croatia, free elections were held in May 1990 and the overwhelming majority of voters voted for the Croatian nationalist party. But here again, the economic crisis is decisive. The Croatian government is moving in the direction of privatizing state-owned businesses and joining the European

The Yugoslav Federation



In addition to the six republics, the map shows Yugoslavia’s two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo.

Community, plus moving into the sphere of the International Monetary Fund’s usurious free market regime. A most dangerous sign is the fact that Harvard free market economist Jeffrey Sachs has been named as an economic adviser to Croatia. It was Sachs who consolidated the takeover of Bolivia by the “black economy”—drugs—and who masterminded the current economic disintegration of Poland. Sachs was previously an adviser to the federal government of Yugoslavia, notably during the tenure of Ante Markovic, a Croat, as prime minister.

For Croatia, the overriding question is not whether or not it will become independent; that has already virtually occurred. But will it develop and blossom, in the context of a revived European economy as a whole, or will it be subjected to a Balkan parody of the tragedy that has befallen Poland?

Under circumstances of economic crisis like those prevailing today, the British, among others, are able to play off nationalist movements for their own aims. The Yugoslav state, after all, was a creature of the notorious British geopolitical gamemasters, who created this federation out of whole cloth and put it under a dictatorial king. Yugoslavia, which immediately went into crisis, since such diverse cultures were unable to coexist, was held together for the most part not by any ideal of development and progress, but by the Serbian monarchical dictatorship first, and later by the Serbo-centric communist regime.

The military outlook

The minute Serbia locks itself into an armed conflict of any sort with Croatia, not only will Slovenia and Bosnia join

Croatia, thus presenting a united front on Serbia's western borders, but the Serbian "rear" will blow up, in the province of Kosovo. Serbia is in no position to handle a multi-front crisis.

Slovenia and Croatia are both rather well armed; they probably have at their disposal 50,000 quite well-trained militia, plus a very large number of potential partisans, ready to fight from bases in the many mountains which compose the Croatian and Slovene landscape. Not accidentally, part of the arms equipping these soldiers have been funneled to Croatia from Hungary, which looks with great sympathy on the struggle of this republic, which was once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It is also said that Slovenia has locally manufactured a sophisticated, very lightweight machine gun with a 150-round cartridge and a revolutionary laser sighting system. Such weapons are not possessed even by the Yugoslav Federal Army, which has 250,000 troops, 1,600 tanks, and around 500 aircraft. Thus Croatia and Slovenia are not in the same situation as Lithuania and Latvia, and any attempted military coup might meet with a forceful answer and lead to a long, bloody guerrilla war in the mountains.

A further factor is that the Kosovo region in the south of Yugoslavia, inhabited by ethnic Albanians, is perpetually in revolt against Serbia, which administers it and which has unsuccessfully tried to put down the unrest there. The Kosovo situation is boiling now, just beneath the surface.

In the neighboring Balkan state of Albania, there is emerging a kind of "Romanian" response to the demise of communism. Ramiz Alia has taken on the guise of moderate communist reformer, supposedly an Albanian Gorbachov; but the Albanians are not so foolish as to believe this lie and are strenuously contesting the legitimacy of the present leadership. This in turn affects the situation in Kosovo, and following elections in Albania on March 31, we may expect to see renewed demands by the Kosovo Albanians to join Albania. This factor is also at the heart of the bitter factional war raging in the Serbian elite. Despite all of Milosevic's efforts, Kosovo has not been crushed.

As for the situation in the Yugoslav Army, there are large numbers of Albanian and Bosnian *Muslim* conscripts, paralleling the situation in the Soviet Army. Muslims comprise some 40% of the Yugoslav Army. This creates further imponderables for Serbia in any effort to launch military intervention against other republics.

Yet, there is one result of the unstoppable move by Croatia and Slovenia toward independence which the Draskovic faction may be counting on to bolster Greater Serbia in the longer term. When the two northern republics quit making net budgetary and other economic and financial contributions to the center, that will end the subsidies which are the only basis for existence of the more backward eastern republics, Montenegro and Macedonia. Those republics will then be forced into the Serbian orbit.

Yeltsin declares war on Moscow

by Konstantin George

Some 500,000 people, probably the largest crowd ever in Moscow's history, marched Sunday, March 10, in support of Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, demanding, as has Yeltsin, that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov and his presidential cabinet government resign. The march followed the definitive break that had occurred in February between Yeltsin and Gorbachov. Yeltsin had appeared on Soviet television to demand that Gorbachov resign, and soon thereafter, speaking in the Belorussian capital of Minsk on Feb. 25, Gorbachov denounced Yeltsin and the "so-called democrats" around him in all but name as traitors, working with "foreign centers" to "weaken" and "destroy" the Soviet Union.

A very hot spring is about to begin. It need not end in tragedy, but without the implementation of Lyndon LaRouche's "Productive Triangle" proposal for infrastructure and economic development radiating out along "spiral arms" throughout Europe from its area of greatest productivity in the Paris-Berlin-Vienna area, the Soviet Union is going to explode into civil war. The crisis of the 1905 Revolution prompted the Russian elite to adopt a program of industrial, technological, infrastructural, and agricultural investment and growth, in what became known as the Stolypin reforms.

At this moment—a moment of opportunity to secure the Triangle—what many never dreamed to see, takes place: Half a million people pour out against the regime. But what are they campaigning *for*? Their standard-bearer, Yeltsin, has identified himself with the radical, free market poison of the Shatalin Plan. This is the British liberal policy that is currently destroying what is left of Poland's industry and agriculture; applied to the Soviet Union, it will make the current desperate situation even worse.

Protest against new Union Treaty

The February break ended the year-long period where Yeltsin, popular with both the urban population of the larger Russian cities and in the non-Russian republics, whatever his intention, had played a useful role for Gorbachov in containing raging ferment and unrest from going out of control. During that time, while pretending support and affinity for the "reformers" around Yeltsin, Gorbachov, in an ever-more transparent fashion with each passing month, swung to support rule by the Empire's institutions of "law and order": the military, KGB, and the Russian national elite, who are opposed to any form of loose confederation, let alone dissolu-