

Human toll mounts in Yugoslav war

by Konstantin George

By mid-July, the dynamics of the three-week-old civil war in Yugoslavia had ensured the partition of its territory. A redrawn internal map will contain an independent Slovenia, an independent Croatia in borders different from its present ones, and a much-expanded Serbia.

The human toll in this tragedy is mounting. According to statistics released July 17 by Belgrade TV, 315 had perished in clashes between Serbian and Croatian militias, and 65 were killed in fighting between the Army and Slovenian Territorial Forces. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians, Croat and Serb victims of the Serbian drive to create a "Greater Serbia," have lost their homes and livelihoods, forced to become refugees.

Yugoslavia provides a case study of the consequences of placing a country, in this case a multi-ethnic one, under austerity dictated by the International Monetary Fund. The IMF regimen triggered a vicious circle of hostility among the republics. As the economy contracted, Serbia, the largest of the poor republics, moved to avert a total collapse by increasing the revenues to the federal budget supplied by more prosperous Slovenia and Croatia. For Slovenia and Croatia, this policy ended any basis for remaining in a centralized Yugoslav Federation.

The week of fighting in Slovenia between the Serbian-commanded Yugoslav Army and Slovenian Territorial Forces ended in a debacle for the Army. Even the most fanatical Greater Serbian stalwarts in the Army Command have learned that "Greater Serbia" cannot be extended to embrace Slovenia or the majority of Croatia, where Croats predominate.

The Army's strategy is twofold: 1) not to occupy, but to weaken, physically isolate from outside economic links, and otherwise "punish" Slovenia and Croatia as much as possible, and 2) to forge "Greater Serbia" by occupying and annexing Serb-inhabited regions of Croatia (Krajina in southern Croatia and parts of Slavonia in northern Croatia), and the Serb-inhabited regions of Bosnia. These regions have been seized by Army units consisting of reliable Serbian reservists called up since June 25. Combined with intimidation and blackmail against Croatia is the standing "offer" to "compensate" Croatia for its losses with a much larger territory formed by the one third of Bosnia inhabited by Bosnia's Croatian minority.

The Lausanne Treaty 'model'

The republic facing the most acute threat to its existence is Bosnia, sandwiched between Serbia and Croatia. Talk of a deal to partition Bosnia has been rampant in the Yugoslav media since May. Schemes to this end were at the heart of a series of meetings, whose contents have never been officially disclosed, from late May into June, among the Presidents of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia. On July 14, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman said that the "best solution" would be a partition of Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia. Although Croatia does not prefer such a ruthless act, Tudjman had been backed into a corner by 1) the de facto loss of Krajina and parts of Slavonia to Serbian units of the Yugoslav Army, and 2) the simultaneous delivery by France and Moscow, on the eve of the Group of Seven summit, of crude *démarche* notes to the Austrian government, warning Austria not to support Slovenia or Croatia.

Tudjman, who had just been in London, cited the 1923 British-sponsored Lausanne Treaty between Greece and Turkey, which ended the 1920-22 Greco-Turkish War, as the model for making each post-partition entity ethnically homogeneous through exchanges of population and territory. Under the Lausanne Treaty, 1,500,000 Greeks were expelled from Asia Minor and Constantinople, and 600,000 Turks were forced to leave Greek territory.

Forced population exchanges have already begun for tens of thousands of Croats and Serbs. Thousands of Croats have fled the Serb-dominated Krajina region of Croatia for the safety of the Croatian-inhabited Adriatic littoral. Croats from a 10-kilometer mixed-population zone in the northern Croatian region of Slavonia, along the entire Croatian-Serbian border, have fled, as this zone is under Yugoslav Army occupation. Thousands of Serbs have arrived in Krajina from the interior of Croatia. According to official Yugoslav statistics, as of July 15, more than 12,000 Serbian refugees from within Croatia had been resettled in the Serbian-ruled region of Vojvodina. Serbia has already drafted plans to resettle arriving Serbs in Kosovo. The Serbian parliament, July 17, passed a law granting any Serb who settles in Kosovo free land, and very long-term, low-interest (5%) home building loans.

The response from Bosnia's leadership was sharp and prompt. The Bosnian Presidium issued a call to the Yugoslav Army to secure "the integrity of the republic and the peaceful life of its citizens" or else "within one week," Bosnia will have to shift to "self-defense." The statement condemned Tudjman by name, saying that a partition of Bosnia would "lead directly to civil war."

Tensions escalated. The Serbian bloc in the Yugoslav State Presidency, a body made up of the presidents of all six republics and the two autonomous zones, boycotted a scheduled meeting on the Croatian island of Brioni. The Army command moved three Army Corps of Serbian reservists up to Croatia's borders with Bosnia and Serbia. The

Croatian defense minister announced early July 17 that a Serbian "invasion" was imminent, with "the next four days" being "most critical." Meanwhile, with the pretext that a SAM missile was fired by Croatian forces at a Yugoslav Air Force plane, the Army command declared it would close off Croatian air space.

Yugoslav Defense Minister Veljko Kadijevic flew to the military airfield at Zadar on Croatia's Adriatic Coast for a secretive meeting with Croatian President Tudjman. Afterward, Kadijevic publicly denied the invasion threat. An agreement was reached to hold in Belgrade, the next day, the long-delayed meeting of the entire State Presidency. The Army's next target, in its goal of seizing all the regions designed to be incorporated into "Greater Serbia," is likely to be the northern Croatian region of Slavonia.

International spillover

The danger of international conflicts arising from the partition of Yugoslavia has emerged on two fronts. On July 14 Hungarian Prime Minister Jozsef Antall reminded Serbia that after World War I, Hungary had ceded Vojvodina to Yugoslavia, not to Serbia. This elicited a fiery response from Serbia. An editorial in the Serbian-run Yugoslav "Socialist" Party daily, *Borba*, accused Hungary of "crude interference" in Yugoslavia's "internal affairs," and "unabashed revanchism." Vojvodina, with a mixed population of Serbs and Hungarians, roughly 55:45 in Serbia's favor, is in theory an "autonomous" region of Serbia, though, as with Kosovo, in reality under central Serbian rule.

Fortunately, no real war danger exists from Hungary. This may not be the case for another neighbor of Yugoslavia. Smelling a coming ethnically based partition of Yugoslavia, Albania is staking out its claims. The storm broke on July 15, when Albania's Communist President Ramiz Alia issued a strong statement reaffirming Albania's resolve to act "for the protection of and the rights of the Albanians in Kosovo," quickly adding: "Civil war also threatens in southern Yugoslavia," a reference embracing both Kosovo and the southernmost republic, Macedonia, which is opposed to Serbia, but hopelessly cut off from support by Croatia and Slovenia. The statement was made as Alia met in Tirana with Ibrahim Rugova, the chairman of the Democratic League of Kosovo—the first such meeting since the Kosovo disorders began in 1981.

The civil war has also put the final nails in the coffin of Yugoslavia's economy. Foreign trade has plunged to near zero. The federal and republic treasuries are empty. Yugoslavia's landlocked neighbors to the north, Hungary and the C.S.F.R., will be hurt, if the civil war closes the oil pipeline from the Adriatic—the only such pipeline to these countries not coming from the U.S.S.R. The pipeline runs through the Slavonian region of Croatia into Hungary—the very region of mixed Croat-Serb population which will become, barring a miracle, the focal point of fighting in the next round.

Croatian democrat appeals to CSCE

Below is the text of "An appeal to the Presidents of member-countries of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and to the world public, on the occasion of a Chetnik, Bolshevik, and Serbian-hegemonist aggression against the Croats and the Republic of Croatia," released in Zagreb on July 12. It is signed "In the great hope that you will listen to your conscience and do everything to stop this war," by the president of the Croatian Democratic Party, Marko Veselica.

The author was born on Jan. 9, 1936 in the village of Glavice, in Croatia. He obtained M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in economic science at the University of Zagreb, where he worked as an assistant professor of economic theory.

Dr. Veselica gradually assumed a leadership role in Croatian political, intellectual, and cultural life. He was a member of the Federal Parliament in Belgrade, an official of the leadership of the Trade Union of Croatia, and a member of the executive board of Matiza Hrvastika. His constant and resolute activity in several spheres of public life aimed at bringing about Croatia's sovereignty and freedom, brought him into numerous conflicts with the leading groups in Yugoslavia.

With the downfall of the 1971 "Croatian Spring," Veselica, a leading figure in the movement, was tried on charges of having conspired against "state and people" and sentenced to seven years of harsh imprisonment and four years of not appearing in public. While serving his sentence he was proclaimed "prisoner of conscience" by Amnesty International. In 1981, in a neo-Stalinist show trial, Dr. Veselica was again accused of having "falsely presented the political situation in Yugoslavia" on the basis of his opinions expressed in an interview to Der Spiegel. He was sentenced to 11 years in prison and four years of not appearing in public. Following an international outcry, he was released earlier.

Dr. Veselica is president of the Croatian Democratic Party, vice president of the Croatian Association of Political Prisoners, and president of the Democratic Club for Eastern Europe.

The Yugoslav state, created on Dec. 1, 1918, is an artificial and forced formation which has not grown into a productive cultural, economic, ethical, and state framework for the development of each nation in this part of Europe. Croats,