

Soviets threaten Europe with war over Yugoslavia

by Nora Hamerman

The Soviet government on Aug. 7 issued its most sharply worded statement to date on the civil war in Yugoslavia, warning that "there is a very thin line between good offices and interference in internal affairs," and that any such interference would be "inadmissible." The statement labeled the introduction of outside armed forces into Yugoslavia as "unacceptable. . . . Those who are suggesting the dispatch of international armed forces to Yugoslavia seem to be mistaken about possible consequences."

The Soviet government hinted that it would absolutely oppose any moves toward recognition of Slovenia or Croatia, the two republics (of the six in the crumbling Yugoslav Federated Socialist Republic) which have declared their independence. "To enter—whether unwillingly or because of egoistic temptations—on one side of the conflict would mean to come into conflict automatically with others inside and outside Yugoslavia, and the conflict would grow into an all-European one."

According to reports in the European press, the Soviets are giving military aid to the troublemakers in Yugoslavia, the Serbians. Serbia, which is still ruled by a communist dictator (Slobodan Milosevic), and which dominates the federal Yugoslav Army, has been on a rampage to militarily crush the Croats and Slovenians in a widening civil war, out of which they aim to create a Greater Serbian empire.

The Kremlin's *démarche* came only a few days after the summit meeting of George Bush with Mikhail Gorbachov in Moscow, and a visit by Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic to Moscow.

Is backing the Greater Serbians in Belgrade part of the "new peaceful world order" pledged by Bush and Gorbachov? No doubt voicing the suspicions of many, on Aug. 4, Slovenian Premier Lojze Peterle was quoted in the Vienna paper *Die Presse* about Slovenian and Croatian efforts to win

diplomatic recognition: "In Brussels, they tell us they want to wait for the decision of the U.S.A. The United States, again, takes the Soviet view into account. And Moscow is paying attention to the position of Belgrade, unfortunately."

Indeed, if Moscow allowed Croatia and Slovenia to win independence, it would set a precedent for the breakaway of many a restive republic within the U.S.S.R. "captive house of nations," something Gorbachov won't tolerate. Whereas, for the Anglo-American bankers and their tame governments, the problem is: If Yugoslavia doesn't exist, how can they collect the huge Yugoslav debt?

German initiatives

Moscow's tough words target the Federal Republic of Germany, the nation which is in the unique position to form ties to the fledging independent republics and create a counterpole in central Europe to Anglo-American policy. But Germany has precious little maneuvering room. It was German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, who said on Aug. 5 that the European Community must consider diplomatic recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, as well as the creation of a joint Western European Union/CSCE force for intervening in Yugoslavia. Genscher spoke after an EC diplomatic mission led by Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek was torpedoed by Serbian President Milosevic.

In an interview with German radio, Foreign Minister Genscher stated that any attempt to change borders by force in Yugoslavia, in order to create a Greater Serbia, is "totally unacceptable." He sharply criticized Serbia's political leadership and said that economic sanctions are in order. He insisted that Serbia has to know that its behavior is "rejected by the international community."

Genscher also stressed the urgent need to expand the European Community to include Austria and Sweden, and

to allow for early association with the EC for Poland, the C.S.F.R., and Hungary—a proposal explicitly contrary to the views stated by French President François Mitterrand during a recent trip to Prague. France has lined up with Britain against Germany on a whole range of crucial strategic issues, including opposing an eventual “blue helmet” peacekeeping mission to Yugoslavia, which Germany would like to avoid, but has not ruled out.

Serbia’s drive to the sea

The Serbians can flout all the conventional European mechanisms of collective security, political solutions, and diplomacy. Serbia thinks it has a strategic combination of possibilities, which gives it the unique chance to realize its thirst for establishing a Greater Serbian empire. On Aug. 4, Milosevic boycotted the latest round of EC meetings with Yugoslav leaders, and said that the Serbs would never accept European intervention into Yugoslavia. Hours after the EC effort began, a downcast Dutch Foreign Minister Van den Broek admitted, “Our mission in Yugoslavia has failed. At the moment, there is nothing more we can do here.” He added that “the world has a right to know” that it was the Serbian side that had been responsible for the talks’ collapse. Yugoslavia now faces “tragedy and catastrophe.”

Meanwhile, the political elites in Croatia and Slovenia, aspiring to their freedom and sovereignty, are just as committed to their independence fight as their counterparts in the Baltic republics. “Their idea is that it is a unique chance given to them by history, like the unique chance that was seized by the people of East Germany, and that they will not stop, they will not compromise, and they will either win everything, or lose everything and go under,” a European expert told *EIR*. But Croatia and Slovenia have borne the brunt of the fighting, which has occurred on their territory, and with their much greater trade ties to the west, they have also suffered gravely from the economic disruption of the war. They are in a poor position economically to withstand the Serbian “tank communists” for long.

Serbia is escalating politically and militarily. On Aug. 1, Budimir Kosutic was named Serbia’s new deputy prime minister. A Milosevic crony, he has a well-earned reputation as a fanatical Serbian chauvinist-expansionist and is the first Serb from Croatia to be named a high-ranking official of the Serbian government. Kosutic is behind the Serbian media barrage slandering Germany and Austria as the plotters of a neo-Nazi “Fourth Reich,” because of their sympathy for the independence of Croatia and Slovenia.

In the leading daily of Frankfurt, Germany, on Aug. 2, correspondent Viktor Meier detailed the Greater Serbian war-plan. “The preliminary goal of the Serbian offensive is to establish a new border (with what’s left of Croatia in the Slavonia region) along the line Zupanja on the Sava-Vinkovci-Osijek-Beli-Monastir. Clearly the Serbians want to attack the important rail junction of Vinkovci in the next days, although in this town

live 71,000 Croats and only 13,000 Serbs. Osijek, which is inhabited by 91,000 Croats and 29,000 Serbs, has become a frontline city.” Serbian conquest of these areas could turn more than 160,000 Croats into refugees.

The occupation of the Croatian region Krajina, and its capital Knin, has cut the main rail line between the Croatian capital, Zagreb, and the central and southern portions of Croatia’s Dalmatian Coast. Meier warned that Serbia is planning “to extend the Serbian area all the way down to the sea.”

The Serbian military offensive aims at conquering a territorial corridor across Bosnia-Herzegovina, to unite the two Serb communities in southern and northeastern Croatia. This was confirmed in remarks Aug. 2 by Lazar Macura, “information minister” of the self-proclaimed autonomous Serbian region of Krajina. He also confirmed secret talks between the Serbs and a current of Bosnian Muslims opposed to the present Muslim President of Bosnia, with the aim of splitting Bosnia and creating a section that would join Serbia as a special Muslim satellite. *EIR* learned that Macura went to London to conduct a media blitz to push his Krajina/Greater Serbia cause, and while he was there, met Aug. 7 with Serbo-Yugoslav Crown Prince Alexander, the would-be monarch of Greater Serbia.

‘Very precarious’

In a briefing on Aug. 7 to *EIR*’s editors, a leading European political analyst said the strategic situation is “as precarious” as this review had warned it would become if Lyndon LaRouche’s “Productive Triangle” failed to be implemented in central Europe, and “probably even more so.”

“In the only part of the world where approximately 300,000 American troops with nuclear warheads still face directly some 250,000 Russian troops in east Germany, and approximately 30-50,000 troops in Poland, the distance between the part of Europe where NATO and affiliated troops are stationed, and the heartland of the Soviet Union has shrunk, by the distance between the river Elbe and the river Oder,” he pointed out. “In this very part of the world, we have a dynamic which is not only the potential for war, but is an outright war.”

He observed that “Yugoslavia is only about four hours’ car drive from Munich, and about an hour and a half from Vienna.” What was not supposed to ever happen again—war in Europe, 46 years after the end of World War II—is happening.

NATO members Greece and Turkey are already in danger of being drawn in. On Aug. 6, a London paper reported that Turkey had notified the State Department of its concern about the Yugoslav crisis, particularly in Bosnia, which has a Turkish minority. Macedonia, the easternmost republic, set a referendum on independence from Serbia for Sept. 8. Were Belgrade to counter with a regional extension of military and irregular operations, this would create another crisis area, at the border with Greece.