

# Oil embargo of Serbia misses its target

by Konstantin George

On Aug. 19, Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis issued a decree, taking effect immediately, closing the Greek border with former Yugoslavia to all oil shipments. The move was forced on Greece after a week-long, non-stop western media campaign in England, France, The Netherlands, and by the German ARD national television, on the theme that oil and oil products originating from the northern Greek port of Thessaloniki were "breaking the embargo" and feeding the Serbian war machine. Added to the media campaign were behind-the-scenes threats that alleged continued Greek violation of the embargo would lead to sanctions against Greece in the form of cutbacks or stoppage in vital European Community financial aid. Hovering on the brink of state bankruptcy as a result of a vicious International Monetary Fund-enforced de facto credit embargo, which has led to a severe social crisis accompanied by non-ending strikes, Greece had no choice but to stop all oil shipments.

If the measure would actually make a real contribution to hurting the war machine of Serbian aggression, the campaign that produced it would have been justified, whatever the cost to Greece. However, nothing of the sort will result from this. In fact, the embargo forced on Greece will only create the conditions for a massive economic and social destabilization of, not Serbia, but the Republic of Macedonia, sandwiched between Serbia and Greece.

## Macedonia and Kosovo hurt

Contrary to the image portrayed by the mass media, at least 90% of the oil crossing the border into former Yugoslavia was not for Serbia, but for the Republic of Macedonia. This source of oil was beleaguered Macedonia's sole oil lifeline to the outside world. Beyond that, as even the ARD television broadcast stated, but without the context that would have alerted viewers to the significance of the fact, a high percentage of the remaining oil that went to "Serbia" was in "Serbian trucks going to Pristina." Pristina is the capital of the Albanian-inhabited Kosovo region of Serbia. Technically, this was indeed a violation of the embargo. In terms of license plates, the trucks were "Serbian." But in terms of drivers and ownership, they were Albanian, and the oil in these trucks was the only source of oil for the Albanians of Kosovo.

The net result of the "embargo victory" on the Greek border will have zero effect on the Serbian war machine, but



will have devastating effect on the Republic of Macedonia, and secondarily on Kosovo, thus feeding in to Anglo-American plans for a widening of the conflict zone into the southern tier of the Balkans.

## Danube route crucial

As has been known all along to every western government, the main and crucial route for oil into Serbia, and indeed all other essential goods, is through Romania via the Danube by ship. Furthermore, this route serves only Serbia, as Romania and Serbia share a common border, which is not the case between Greece and Serbia. This fact was ironically and cruelly proven to the same media that had castigated Greece, when a courageous German national television team from ZDF tried to film and document the Danube route. The correspondent and cameraman were beaten up by Serbian guards as they tried to leave Serbia for Bulgaria, and most of their film was confiscated. The cameraman was arrested, and while now free on bail, had his passport taken away, and cannot leave Serbia. On Aug. 31, he will appear before a Serbian court, which will decide whether to deport him or jail him for supposedly having attacked a border guard.

This could still end in a very good result. The very severity of the Serbian response proved beyond any, doubt that the ZDF team had found the logistical Achilles' heel in the Serbian war machine. If the embargo is ever to be effective, the Danube route must be closed immediately. Beyond that, the Greek proposal for tight U.N. monitoring of its border with former Yugoslavia must be accepted, and a regimen established whereby contraband to Serbia is stopped, but the oil supply lifeline to the Republic of Macedonia is reopened.