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## Interview: Viktor Mizin

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# The Ivanov-Lavrov proposal for Kosovo

*Viktor Mizin is a counselor at the Russian UN Mission, and one of Russia's top diplomatic experts on the Balkans and Iraq. He served in several important posts, most recently as head of office for Yugoslavia and Iraq in the Directorate for International Organizations in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Mizin, who pointed out that he gave the interview "upon instructions" of Russian Ambassador Sergei Lavrov, commented on the substance and the implication of the "Kosovo proposal" by Russia Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, presented in a press conference by Ambassador Lavrov on March 21. The proposal is simple: A delegation including the 15 ambassadors of the UN Security Council, should immediately go to Kosovo and Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, and see "directly, on the ground," what has happened after one year of NATO and UN administration. On that basis, the Security Council could deliberate more responsibly, in a situation that is generally considered to be heading toward a new war.*

*The Security Council gave the mandate—in Resolution 1244, approved on June 10, 1999—to the NATO mission (KFOR) and the UN mission (UNMIK) that have since run Kosovo. KFOR and UNMIK, the latter under Bernard Kouchner, not only in the opinion of many UN but also NATO members, have not followed that mandate. Russia, China, and other nations stress that what is being willingly ignored, is that Resolution 1244 explicitly proclaims: "The commitment of all member states to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other states of the region, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act." If national sovereignty is not upheld in Kosovo, they argue, irreparable disorder in international relations would be set in motion, with destabilizing consequences, as Dr. Mizin underlines, "for the whole world."*

*Dr. Mizin spoke with Umberto Pascali on March 24 and 27.*

**EIR:** Please describe for us the Ivanov-Lavrov proposal that, I understand, is now being discussed among UN ambassadors, both publicly and privately.

**Mizin:** Yes, the proposal is being discussed among the Security Council members. Nobody has rejected this proposal. We know some members are quite favorable to start the mission right away, in April, others would like to wait longer. Apparently, the proposal is by now supported also by Mr.

Kouchner, the head of UNMIK. The concept is very simple: We think it would be useful if the members of the Security Council would see for themselves the developments on the ground. Probably not all the Council members will be able to go, but several will. We also think it would be very useful if the Council did not confine itself to visiting Kosovo, but also go to Belgrade. It would be important to talk with the Belgrade authorities, because Kosovo is an integral part of Yugoslavia as stated in Resolution 1244.

The cornerstone of our attitude toward the entire Kosovo problem is that, as Security Council Resolution 1244 stipulates, the territorial integrity and the national sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must be respected. It would be counterproductive to seek the resolution of the Kosovo conflict without the participation of Yugoslav authorities.

**EIR:** So, the basic point is to uphold the principle of national sovereignty? Is there, from the Russian side, also the consideration to defend Yugoslavia?

**Mizin:** Sometimes the position of Russia is presented as pro-Yugoslavia, because we are of the same religion, because of historical reasons. . . . But, we are not the advocate of Belgrade. For us, it is much more important, that this is a question of principle. The basis of our approach is respect for international law. What we are most concerned about, is to safeguard the sovereignty and prerogatives of the Security Council. We are very much concerned that that principle not be diluted.

Concerning national sovereignty, we think that it is really important, especially in Europe, where there are so many [ethnic] enclaves inside countries. We should not set the precedent that the UNMIK—a UN organism—would preside over the secession of the territory it is administering on the basis of a UN resolution.

**EIR:** On the other side, ethnic Albanians are calling for the independence of Kosovo.

**Mizin:** We are not naive, and we understand the developments. We think it imperative that UNMIK not refuse to talk with the Yugoslav authorities, that talks on the future status of Kosovo between the Yugoslav government and UNMIK should start without delay. It is not that we do not recognize the principle of self-determination, but I am thinking about humanitarian intervention that is now highly popular and fashionable. Of course, we are for strict respect of human rights, but we are also afraid when we see the tendency to put the concept of "human rights" above the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a country.

Speaking about Europe, I think that if we put too much stress on the principle of self-determination, or even humanitarian intervention, it could lead to blowing up the whole structure of Europe. Because in every European country, Russia included, there are so many different areas, so many

different ethnicities, that would blow up the entire structure. Thus, we think we should be extremely conscious about exercising this principle. Of course, we must assist people in trouble, when there is a mass violation of human rights, atrocities. But we should not be pushed into this kind of CNN-led politics. We still think that the use of force must be decided by the UN Security Council, otherwise we will be in trouble.

For example, the Kosovo intervention: That was decided unilaterally. We warned against what was called by the Russian President, “an aggression.” We see now the results. Although some people in Washington would like to say it was a success, more and more people understand that we are at an impasse, and no one really knows what the way out could be. Even if there is a vote, in Kosovo, and the majority of the people vote for the secession of the country, what will come next? You know the danger involved. . . .

**EIR:** The group that pushed for the NATO bombing last year is sometimes called the “Brzezinski gang.”

**Mizin:** Yes, exactly. It is an adequate definition. If I am not mistaken, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Madeleine Albright are related, or very close. It goes back to the World War II period, when the Czechoslovakian government in exile in London was presided over by Benes; I think Brzezinski married a niece of Benes, and the father of Albright was a member of that government. To follow those policies, to give away Yugoslav sovereignty, would be a terrible precedent for the entire world. If you just think about countries like France, Spain, Russia, Italy—If we accept his very dangerous precedent in Yugoslavia, then we are in trouble. And also, unlike all these countries, Kosovo is now administered by the United Nations. So, it would be a tremendous blow to the authority and the prestige of the UN, if the UNMIK mission ended up aiding the secession of a region of a country from its entirety. How then would countries from the Third World regard future UN operations? . . .

**EIR:** What is your opinion on how Kouchner has run the UN administration in Kosovo? What do you expect?

**Mizin:** Unfortunately, we think that the head of UNMIK, Mr. Kouchner, cannot be described as fulfilling Resolution 1244 fully, and we are afraid that, although the Resolution gives to Kouchner the power of civil administration, we still think that in administering Kosovo he should think more about consultation with Yugoslav authorities. Again, we are against any action to partition or to secede Kosovo from Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, we are witnessing all the signs of such a dangerous drift of the territory away from Yugoslavia. Now UNMIK basically administers such drift and all but prepares the condition for that—like issuing the travel documents; like adopting deutschmarks as national currency. Everything has been done—registration plates, everything—to go for the “independency.” That is why, frankly, we are

criticizing him. Because we think it is very dangerous. . . . He has a mandate from 1244 to administer the Kosovo province of Yugoslavia. And, of course, we don’t think that the Security Council should micro-manage this conflict, but one would think that at least he could consult, he could inform the Council, about the most important steps, issues, the documents he adopts. And it is not always the case. Sometimes the Security Council is informed only on a *post factum* basis.

**EIR:** Did you say that Kouchner supported the idea of a Security Council mission to Kosovo?

**Mizin:** Yes, he also supported the proposal. He is very interested in bringing the world community in, because UNMIK is in dire straits. Some countries don’t meet their obligations, there is a problem of financing, and probably Kouchner’s idea is that by bringing in the representatives of the most influential world body, it would stimulate more grants, more funding for the mission.

**EIR:** Recently, some members of the Parliament in Belgrade charged that Russia was not adequately defending Yugoslavia’s rights. There were insinuations of a “Chechnya for Kosovo” deal. On March 14 in New York, Ambassador Lavrov stressed, in answer to UN Balkan envoy Carl Bildt, that the UN and NATO must deal with Yugoslavia as agreed, despite any indictment of Milosevic as a war criminal. “Indictments are against individuals not governments and countries,” the Ambassador said.

**Mizin:** No. I can tell you—and I think that I know—there was not any kind of deal like that, Chechnya for Kosovo, because we still think that we have enough power—I am thinking about moral power—to protect the integrity and sovereignty of Russia without any kind of deal like that. Of course, we cannot gag the people in Yugoslavia. Usually it is said that we are too close to Yugoslavia. . . .

**EIR:** Some Balkan observers stress that Milosevic was not invented by the Russians, but by Kissinger and Eagleburger.

**Mizin:** Yes, when he was useful to them. . . .

**EIR:** A study issued by the UN University on March 20, “Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention,” concluded that the NATO bombings last year, carried out without a UN decision or by elected institutions of the NATO countries, create a dangerous precedent in terms of making countries “forfeit sovereignty on humanitarian grounds.” On the other hand, it called for the promotion of “an international consensus” on the point at which “a state forfeits sovereignty.”

**Mizin:** We agree on the dangerous precedent established by the bombing; we do not agree that someone can find a “consensus” on imposing on any country of the world the “forfeit of sovereignty.”