

## Slovak leader demands reopening of the Danube

*In this open letter, Augustine Marko, president of the Slovak Society for the Protection of Democracy and Humanity, appealed to President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Jacques Chirac, and German Prime Minister Gerhard Schröder to immediately provide aid to compensate for the damage done in the area, particularly on the Danube River, by the war against Yugoslavia.*

During the negotiations with the government of Yugoslavia at Rambouillet and Paris, your deputies drafted an agreement for ratification. The government of Yugoslavia refused to ratify it. You then demanded ratification under the threat of force.

On March 24, 1999 you gave the command for the air force of the NATO states to attack Yugoslavia. Mrs. Madeleine Albright, in a radio speech to the people of Yugoslavia, explained that the attack was not directed against the citizens of Yugoslavia, but against the Yugoslav President, for what she called his criminal policy.

During the air raids, your air force also destroyed bridges which spanned the Danube. As a consequence, ship transport on a great leg of the Danube was broken up,

and the economic life of those states which use the Danube as a thoroughfare was also devastated.

These facts concern the citizens of the Slovak Republic, too. Besides the wrecking of trade on the Danube, it is impossible to deliver the ships purchased by Western Europeans, which have been produced by the Slovak shipyard at Komarno. At present in Komarno, there are two ships already produced which are prepared for delivery. They were produced in the shipyard and promised to the purchasers at the port of Izmail on the Black Sea. The ships are able to sail the ocean as well.

In the shipyard, there are six other ships as well. Our economy is very dependent on foreign trade, and due to the impossibility of delivering the ships to the purchasers, it has been very badly injured by the losses. If this situation continues a long time, the shipyard will have to stop producing ships. This would injure the citizens of our country very much.

Our citizens had no part in this situation and therefore we demand:

1. Compensate our economy for the damages which resulted from the conflict in Yugoslavia, and
2. We ask for financial and technical aid for the removal of the destroyed bridges blocking the Danube.

This problem concerns all the states using the Danube as a thoroughfare.

Augustine Marko, president  
Pavol Martinicky, vice-president

Brussels, have drawn up designs for a Balkans free-trade zone tied to the euro, which would be entirely administered from Brussels. "Initiators of the project don't seem to have much confidence in the capacity of the area's representatives to handle the change."

And, as far as "great decisions" are concerned, the EU wants to manage economic policies from outside the Balkans. Therefore, if what is being discussed at the EU level does not bring at least some definite investments into Bulgaria and the Balkans, "it should all be in vain," the daily warned.

### 'Bobo' Hombach, saboteur

The meeting of the EU foreign ministers in Brussels on July 19, illustrated the virtual reality thinking of the Eurocrats, once again, when they decided, after hours of heated debate, to decentralize what was to have become a centralized agency for the future Balkans aid programs. The main office of the agency, with its head Bodo "Bobo" Hombach, will be established in Brussels. The administrative branch will be based in Thessaloniki, Greece, and yet a third office, for the operational branch, will be set up in the Kosovar provincial capital of Pristina. All of that will come into being only in September.

As far as "Bobo" Hombach—the former head of the German Chancellor's office, who has a murky financial record—is concerned, he received his first dose of what the Balkan nations actually expect from his agency, when touring the region during the week before the July 19 meeting. Hombach told the Bulgarians that he considered their country "an agent and not a subject of the Stability Pact," but he would not be more concrete. Bulgarian Prime Minister Ivan Kostov presented Hombach with a list of urgent projects, like the clearing of the Danube River, and other infrastructure projects such as construction of a rail line from Sofia to Skopje, the Macedonian capital, as well as an overhaul of the electricity grid of Macedonia, which has run down considerably, after a decade of independence from Yugoslavia.

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nadezhda Mikhailova presented Hombach with three priority projects: Corridor 4 (from Berlin to Constanta on the Black Sea), Corridor 8 (from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea), and the construction of a second major bridge across the Danube, between Bulgaria and Romania.

The one existing bridge between Ruse and Giorgiu is totally overloaded, particularly now that water transport has