

Romanian crisis could threaten world peace

by Konstantin George

The Dec. 16 eruption of a Romanian popular revolt and an ensuing three-day bloodbath ordered by Communist despot Nicolae Ceausescu, butchering at least 2,000 men, women, and children in the city of Timisoara, marks the onset of a crisis in the powderkeg of Europe, the Balkans. Given the climate of revolutionary ferment throughout Eastern Europe, mass protests against one of the most vicious Stalinist dictatorships in the world were inevitable, despite the enormous risks and penalties.

The people of Romania, now going through their third winter of starving and freezing under Ceausescu, have nothing to lose. This is proven by the fact that the Timisoara massacre failed to stop mass protests from spreading, by Dec. 19, to other large Romanian cities: Protests have been held in the Carpathian industrial center of Brasov, the Transylvanian city of Cluj, and in the Banat cities of Arad and Kurtos, near Timisoara. In Timisoara itself, protests of 50,000 people, in defiance of tanks and troops in the streets, were continuing as *EIR* went to press.

More blood will flow in Romania. Ceausescu will stop at nothing to maintain his rule, and this was made clear in a speech he delivered in Bucharest Dec. 20, after his return from Iran. He declared that Hungary and other unnamed "foreign powers" were responsible for the trouble in the country, and that Romania would take "all necessary measures" to crush the protests.

More bloodbaths will occur, but Ceausescu's days in power are numbered. His speech, which internationalized the Romanian crisis into an affair of the Warsaw Pact as a whole, ensures his near-future doom, almost certainly before this winter has ended. Two decisive factors guarantee this:

- 1) The popular revolt and its accompanying visible cracks in the power institutions, above all in the Army, that have enabled him to rule.

- 2) Moscow, for its own nefarious reasons, has apparently decided to shape its own version of a post-Ceausescu Romania, as a stepping-stone to extending Soviet power to the Adriatic, by the political acquisition of most of crisis-racked Yugoslavia.

The likelihood of just such a Balkan crisis centered on Romania and Yugoslavia, creating the pretext for Soviet troops to enter Romania as anti-Ceausescu "liberators," was forecast by Lyndon LaRouche more than one year ago, in an Oct. 31, 1988 national television broadcast during the

presidential election campaign.

The Soviet media of Dec. 18 clearly documented a shift to a post-Ceausescu policy. Soviet radio and TV, including Romanian-language broadcasts from across the border in Romanian-speaking Soviet Moldavia, played up the "anti-regime" protests in Timisoara as "demonstrations for democracy and the rights of ethnic Hungarians and ethnic Germans," as well as broadcasting the news and the casualty figures of the massacres committed by troops and security forces (giving far higher totals at the time than Western radio was reporting). Until very recently, the same Soviet media had gone out of its way to praise Ceausescu's brutal austerity policy as a success story, whereby all foreign debt to the West had been eliminated.

The media of Bulgaria, Moscow's core satellite in the Balkans, made the same instant "anti-Ceausescu" turn on Dec. 18. Radio Sofia announced that Romania had shut all its borders, including that with Bulgaria, and had closed the Danube River, a treaty-defined international waterway, to all shipping. Yugoslavia's Radio Belgrade confirmed this, adding that the borders and the Danube would be closed into the New Year.

The closing of the Danube alone provides enough reason for a Soviet and/or Warsaw Pact military intervention into Romania. The Soviet Union, together with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria—all on the Danube and all heavily dependent on the Danube for trade flows among them—can point to Romania's violation of international treaties as having gravely injured the economic national security of the Warsaw Pact members, as grounds for intervention.

The Yugoslav factor

Romania's closure of the Danube, combined with the ethnic tinderbox quality of the protests in the Banat region (a region with three ethnic minorities—Hungarians, Germans, and Serbs) has drawn Yugoslavia, where the Serbs run the Army, into the vortex. For reasons involving the Danube and the oppression of the Serbian minority in the Banat, Moscow can count on Serbian support, should it decide to move into Romania.

On the same weekend that Timisoara erupted, the Yugoslav government unveiled a new austerity program dictated by the International Monetary Fund—the most vicious ever. It envisages across-the-board elimination of subsidies for industrial enterprises, which will most heavily hit the more backward industries found in Yugoslavia's eastern half—Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Starting Dec. 18, a tidal wave of mass strike protests swept these republics, demanding the ouster of Prime Minister Ante Markovic. A Yugoslav internal confrontation, leading to fragmentation along East-West lines, with the Serb-dominated east pitted against the western republics of Slovenia and Croatia, is unfolding in tandem with the Romanian crisis. This is the kind of explosive combination of which world wars are made.