

Serbians rebel against IMF brand of communism

by Umberto Pascali

Mass demonstrations have been sweeping the Serbia of communist dictator Slobodan Milosevic since Nov. 18. Every day, in the capital city of Belgrade and several others cities, demonstrators march, protesting the annulment of the Nov. 17 regional elections, in which Milosevic's regime lost, in the most important cities, to the coalition of opposition parties that gathered under the name Zajedno ("Together"). Fifteen of the most important cities, including Belgrade, were won by Zajedno.

After having originally acknowledged the defeat, the regime put on the brakes. Milosevic's Socialist Party accused the opposition of having "prematurely" declared victory. The electoral results in the most important cities were annulled, and a new electoral round was set up for Nov. 27. In the meantime, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal from the opposition and certified the local election as "irregular." On Nov. 25, students and teachers in Sarajevo, Bosnia joined the protest, in a demonstration of over 100,000 people.

The number of protestors kept growing. Despite the tight control Milosevic has on the Serbian trade unions, workers began to join the anti-Milosevic movement. The biggest factory in Belgrade is on strike as we go to press, and others are joining every day. On Nov. 28, the chairman of Serbia's Association of Independent Trade Unions, which is said to represent 700,000 members, called for joining the protest.

The "traditional" methods Milosevic had routinely used in the past to exercise dictatorial control, with the more or less silent complicity of the West, this time did not work. Almost all the media are closely controlled by the regime, and they reported the words of the speaker of the Parliament, Dragan Tomic, who denounced the demonstrators as a "Hitler movement." On Dec. 3, the only two anti-Milosevic radio stations, B-92 and the small student-run Radio Index, were suddenly

ordered to stop broadcasting. The police carried out the first arrests of demonstrators.

The official TV news broadcast images of violent demonstrators, throwing stones—something that, according to observers, has been rather rare. Finally, a sort of ultimatum was issued: Milosevic's spokesmen made clear that further protests were not going to be tolerated. In 1991, facing a wave of protests, Milosevic had sent tanks into the streets, and ordered his police to attack the demonstrators with water cannons and other means. At that time, he easily re-established "order," without suffering any real consequences internationally on the "human rights" front.

This time, the situation was quite different. Milosevic received a warning from the United States: The cancellation of the elections is "unacceptable." He was further warned not to use the police against the demonstrators. In private and in public, he was told that he needed the United States much more than the U.S. needed him.

Sponsor of 'Greater Serbia'

Milosevic, of course, has been credited as the "key" to the Dayton peace accord, which ended the worst phase of the war of aggression and the genocide against Bosnia by the Greater Serbians. His main internationally recognized "merit," is to have kept under control the insane bestiality of the Bosnian Serb butchers Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, thus "guaranteeing" an end to the war.

In fact, it was Milosevic who was the architect of that aggression. He has been the sponsor of the modern form of "Greater Serbia" racist ideology. Under the banner of raving racial chauvinism, Milosevic had taken over the ruling Socialist Party and Yugoslavia.

Milosevic, who was originally trained as a banker by the

Kissinger group, quite lawfully represents the last communist dictator in Europe, but is also one of the first protégés of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in eastern Europe. The World Bank fully appreciated Milosevic's abilities. With him, they had an open door in Yugoslavia/Greater Serbia for further looting. It was one of the first mad experiments of economic shock therapy that precipitated the crisis in Yugoslavia, increasing to an unbearable level the traditional transfusion of wealth from the republics to the Belgrade central government. To the usurers, a strong Nazi-like regime such as Milosevic's appeared as the ideal way to smash any resistance to austerity. The banker-dictator Milosevic has been engaged in a plan for privatization of the Serbian economy. Recently a scandal broke out, when it was revealed that the privatization of the huge Serbian Telecom and other groups, was organized by Milosevic through former British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd.

The 'Peacemaker'

Originally, Milosevic's political strategy—supported by the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale and by the gullible panslavic masochists in Russia—was to transform Yugoslavia into a racist Greater Serbia, in the context of a geopolitical game pushed by London, in order to maintain its control and prevent the economic integration and the mutual development of Europe and the whole Eurasian continent.

The initial resistance of Croatia, and above all the unexpected and exceptional resistance of President Alija Izetbegovic's Bosnia, delivered a powerful blow to the plan. Under the incredulous eyes of the British and Milosevic, Bosnia was able to defend itself against the heavily armed paramilitary gangs of war criminal Ratko Mladic, which had been trained, supplied, and "remote-controlled" by Milosevic's Yugoslavian Army. That unexpected resistance, a kind of modern "Thermopolis," won precious time for the U.S. Presidency to break free, for a moment, from London's tricks, plots, and fifth columns, and to launch a military blow against the logistics and communications of the genocidal machine.

No further direct initiatives were allowed by London against the Greater Serbians. At that point, in the summer of 1995, Milosevic, who had already shown a propensity to "adapt to a credible threat," became the "mediator," the indispensable guarantor of peace, a role that he carried into the U.S.-sponsored Dayton conference. In exchange, Milosevic expected that his power position in Serbia would be secure.

Despite the Dayton accord's formal stress on Bosnia's territorial integrity, sovereignty, return of the refugees, arrest of war criminals, and economic reconstruction, in the one-year period following the accord, none of those points was really implemented. The "Serbian entity" of Bosnia (Republika Srpska) was allowed to remain under the mafia-like control of the Karadzic-Mladic group.

It was only after several months of blackmail, that Karadzic, first, and Mladic, second, accepted to step down—de jure,

but not de facto—from their positions of political and military supreme leadership. Indeed, the two war criminals still retain their power. Recently, they have created Ku Klux Klan-style vigilante formations that act especially during the night, assaulting, bombing, or burning the houses of refugees in Republika Srpska, or confronting refugees who try to return to their homes.

Concerning the arrest of the war criminals, nothing has been done. In July, the London *Sunday Times* even launched a provocation to make sure that nothing would even be tried. The paper denounced an alleged secret plan ordered by President Clinton to arrest Karadzic using U.S. Special Forces. It reported statements by the British defense minister, the British Chief of the General Staff, and anonymous U.S. high military officers, ridiculing the plan and making clear their coordinated opposition.

Concerning reconstruction, the fraud is even more shameful. Nothing has been done. Sarajevo still does not have water. The amount of money promised by the "donors," even the amount the World Bank says has been disbursed, does not correspond to the truth. This gap was even denounced by Richard Sklar, President Clinton's special envoy for reconstruction. The recent polemics of International Coordinator Carl Bildt (see *Documentation*, p. 46) illustrate the point.

Entering a period of mass strikes

After having tried the "normal" methods to stop the protests, Milosevic is trying now to "reduce tensions." The Belgrade electoral commission has announced that it is going to re-analyze the election results. The B-92 and Index radio stations received preliminary permission to broadcast. The government has even announced the reduction of electric bills, and says it will pay pensions due since October, and issue grants to students.

But the economic situation in Serbia is terrible, after Milosevic's World Bank/communist experiment. Average per-capita income went from \$3,000 in 1989 to less than \$1,500 now. An average salary is less than \$140 per month, that is, barely enough to pay for utilities. More than one-third of the population lives below the poverty line.

Former Foreign Minister Ilija Djukic said: "It is obvious that the citizens are motivated, not by support for Zajedno, but because of real problems—the terrible economic situation, Yugoslavia's international isolation, and rejection of already compromised authorities."

A similar situation, though not so extreme, exists in Croatia, where a strike of the railworkers has blocked the country. It must be clear to the "only remaining superpower," as Istvan Webel (see interview) calls the United States, that a situation of economic and political insanity created by London's geopolitics and World Bank shock-therapists cannot be "controlled." A situation of uncontrollable chaos could ensue soon, if the people of the Balkans are not given the chance to live like human beings.