

'Balkan graveyards are filled with President Milosevic's broken promises'

by Umberto Pascali

After delivering a "final ultimatum" to Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic to get his armed gangs out of Kosova or face air strikes, NATO postponed its ultimatum twice within a few days. NATO had issued an "activation order" for air strikes on Oct. 13. But, when U.S. Balkans envoy and chief negotiator Richard Holbrooke announced that he had reached a deal with Milosevic, NATO said that there would be no attacks before Oct. 17. This supposedly gives Milosevic the time to fulfill what he had solemnly promised to do. But, reports from NATO intelligence and other sources are clear: Milosevic is not withdrawing the troops that, in a few months, have "ethnically cleansed" ethnic Albanian inhabitants from Kosova villages and reduced the region into a scorched earth inferno. In fact, there is evidence of the arrival of fresh troops and the positioning of additional military equipment.

On Oct. 12, when President Clinton announced the deal in New York, he stressed: "But let me be very clear: Commitments are not compliance. Balkan graveyards are filled with President Milosevic's broken promises." Indeed, on this point, the President was prophetic.

As *EIR* has stressed, the timidity of NATO stems not just from cowardice; the real scare comes from Moscow. Stirred up by constant British talk of air strikes, Russia, in its most determined opposition to a Western military operation since the collapse of the Soviet empire, is opposing air strikes, making generic threats in public and, reportedly, more precise ones in confidential talks. The crisis in Kosova—whose people are literally starving as a result of International Monetary Fund-World Bank policies—is generating the biggest anti-West reaction in Moscow since the end of the Cold War, fuelled as well by the effect of IMF conditions on Russia and the perception that the West is close to a financial collapse.

On Oct. 16, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergejev met with his Belarus counterpart and announced the renewal of military ties, arguing that this was necessary because of the Kosova situation. "We have the legal basis to pool our capabilities in the military-political sphere to counter the eastward expansion of NATO." The two ministers told Itar-TASS that, for the moment at least, there has been no decision "on rendering military assistance to Belgrade."

However, pan-Slav chauvinist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who at a recent Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe conference on Kosova in Copenhagen said that "Albania does not exist," told Ekho Moskvy radio that he had

received a request from Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Vojislav Seselj, requesting that Serbia be invited to join the Belarus-Russia union. "Who is stopping us from sending our fleet into the Mediterranean Sea for a friendly visit to Serbian ports?" asked Zhirinovsky. In recent weeks, Seselj has grabbed the spotlight for threatening terrorist attacks on NATO countries and troops and "whoever helps them."

A Balkan source commented: "It seems that the window of opportunity opened up with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, is going to be over soon."

NATO poses its ultimatum, again

Ibrahim Rugova, the leader of the ethnic Albanians (who represent more than 90% of the Kosova population), has accused Belgrade of strengthening its military presence—with little results. Milosevic kept his game going despite further "ultimatums." On Oct. 15, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and NATO military chief Gen. Wesley Clark, in a meeting with Milosevic, complained about the non-withdrawal. After the meeting, Milosevic, apparently calm and in control, told reporters that he had complied fully with the UN Security Council resolution that called for an end to his genocide in Kosova.

Solana, on the contrary, said that "many army and special police units . . . remain in Kosova. These units must be withdrawn immediately. I have come to Belgrade today to deliver a simple but strong message. [Milosevic] must comply fully and immediately. NATO will maintain its pressure until we have evidence that compliance has been fully achieved. We will remain ready and willing to act."

The list of violations of the Milosevic-Holbrooke deal is getting longer by the day. For example, just on Oct. 15: Heavily armed Serb military and police units, including radar systems, were stationed in the village of Shkabaj, near Prishtina. The troops stationed in northeast Kosova, did not withdraw one inch. Rather, three busloads of fresh troops reinforced Serb positions near Paodujeva. Police stations in Llužan, Orllan, and Krpimeh have been strengthened. In the area of Skenderaj, Serb forces occupying 14 different villages have been beefed up. A police commander in the city of Malisheva, southwest of Kosova, told *USA Today*: "We haven't had any order to move out, not by Oct. 17, not by the 18th." In the meantime, the list of refugees who have died in their primitive

camps, wracked by cold, hunger, and disease — men, women, and children — is getting longer by the hour.

On Oct. 16, the day before the NATO deadline, another delegation, led by top negotiator and U.S. Ambassador in Macedonia Christopher Hill, was in Belgrade to tell Milosevic that the withdrawal was “far from satisfactory,” as U.S. sources put it. Apparently, to no avail. And so, that same day, following a strong request from France and other NATO countries, the NATO ambassadors met in Brussels to discuss a further 10-day postponement of the ultimatum.

Documentation

Put an end to the game called ‘negotiations’

On Oct. 11, the Kosova Information Center (KIC), which is close to Kosova President Ibrahim Rugova and the Democratic League of Kosova, reported on an editorial which appeared on the same day in the Kosova evening daily Informatori, by its editor by Enver Malokou. According to observers, the editorial was a last cry for effective air strikes against Milosevic’s genocidal machine, and signalled opposition to what many in Kosova view as pressure from Western negotiators, who had presented them with a draft of a deal discussed in Belgrade with Milosevic. Kosova’s ethnic Albanians were not part of the official negotiations, and were not required to sign the agreement. Here are excerpts from the KIC report:

The international community has been entreating Milosevic to comply with the demands of the UN Resolution and the Contact Group over Kosova, but the entreaties have fallen on deaf ears so far, Enver Malokou, the editor in chief of the *Informatori* evening newspaper maintains in a leading article on Oct 11. Milosevic has been refusing to accept what are “extremely soft” demands put forward by international entities, Maloku writes.

What has the Contact Group done since March 1998? How many lives have been saved by the UN Security Council? . . . Have statements by [international political leaders] thwarted at all the Serb killing machinery? To these questions, the *Informatori* writer answers negatively. “Therefore, it is futile for the world to continue to threaten and plead with Serbia as heretofore, and it is pointless for leading diplomats to continue kneeling down to the man who is responsible for the most monstrous crimes this half-century.”

The Western world has made many mistakes and undermined their authority and credibility by “being fooled by a petty dictator. . . . It is hard to believe diplomacy will be able to achieve anything without force backing it. . . . Therefore, the arrival of diplomats [the delegation led by U.S. envoy

Richard Holbrooke] in Prishtina (on Oct. 10) was seen with dread here, because the problem of Kosova is not in Kosova, but in Belgrade! The possibility of averting (NATO) military intervention against Serb targets should not be sought in the Kosovar politics, but rather in Belgrade. . . .” Mr. Malokou concludes stressing his hope that Western diplomats have been convinced by the talks in Prishtina that “Kosova is asking loudly for and looking forward to NATO’s intervention.”

The following is from a commentary by editor Veton Surroi on the text of the Holbrooke-Milosevic deal published on Oct. 14 in the Kosova daily Koha Ditore:

. . . The deployment of 2,000 OSCE “verifiers” to Kosova and allowing NATO observer flights, is in substance a concession Milosevic would have made, even without enormous pressure from NATO. What is referred to as the “verification mission,” is in fact the broadening of the present diplomatic observer mission. Instead of a dozen observers, this mission now numbers 2,000.

Following observation flights above Kosova is no different either: information on police/military movements was anyway taken from the air, through satellite images. Now, with NATO air patrols, this information will be furthermore reliable and accessible — and that’s it.

“Verifiers” and air patrols do not create a safe environment for Albanian refugees either, nor for the potential ones: Kosova, through these two concessions, remains a Serb regime concentration camp observed by foreigners, from air and land. [These documents] leave Kosova . . . with a level of self-governance below what it enjoyed up to 1989; and without the right to self-determination, in the aftermath of a three-year period. . . .

If the greatest military force in the history of mankind was to be employed in order to “squeeze” such concessions from Milosevic, then the message sent out to mini-dictators around the globe is, that you can get away with the crimes you have committed. . . . There is no approval from his [Milosevic’s] side to cooperate with The Hague Tribunal [on war crimes], there is no approval from his side that security in Kosova should be installed by peace-keeping forces and not by his war-raging forces; there is no approval from his side that the basis for future negotiations should be those rights divested by Belgrade in 1989. . . . All of these are lacking because Milosevic is today *treated as a peace-building partner and not the one accountable for destruction*. Furthermore, he is treated as a partner who comes out of this crisis even stronger: Not only can he say that he has baffled NATO pressure, but has used the opportunity to purge freedom of speech in his country. . . .

Why does this happen, ask foreign journalists inside and outside of Kosova? This is an old question, asked too often in this decade throughout the devastating wars of the former Yugoslavia. But, it is older than this. It originates more than 50 years ago and it was addressed to Mr. Chamberlain, carrying a letter in his hand, upon his return from Munich, believing, it said, that there would be no war.