

Putin in Balkans Lays Down 'Anti-Owen Plan'

Russian President Vladimir Putin followed his June 16 meeting with President George Bush with an immediate and surprising visit to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and then an unscheduled stop in Kosovo, where he visited Russian peace-keeping troops. The stop in the NATO protectorate of Kosovo, which is controlled by the Kosovo Liberation Army, could have been called "too dangerous" for the Russian President, but Putin made a point of going there from Belgrade, immediately after denouncing the KLA as the engine of the instability in the area, and also the NATO/UN push for the effective independence of Kosovo. Putin's "Kosovo mission" was a direct strike against the "New Berlin Congress" plan of Lord David Owen and Henry Kissinger, to redraw Balkan borders on strict racial-ethnic lines (see *EIR*, June 22, 2001).

In Belgrade on June 17, where he pledged continued Russian oil and other energy supplies to Yugoslavia, Putin presented a comprehensive Balkan plan based on cooperation among the area's countries and on the respect of their national borders and sovereignty. Putin warned that "the stability of the region is seriously endangered" by terror-

ism, and proposed a regional conference to reaffirm the inviolability of borders and the territorial integrity of these countries. The guarantor of the agreement would be the UN Security Council. Putin told Russian reporters, it would be "extremely dangerous and destructive" to discuss redrawing borders. Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica added, "This conference would once and for all put an end to the practice of attempts at redrawing state borders and the wars in the Balkans." A Macedonian source enthusiastically told *EIR*, that Putin's proposal "was the anti-Owen plan."

Putin laid great emphasis on relieving pressure on the Macedonian government "to meet the demands of extremists. Stability in the region is seriously threatened, above all from national religious extremism and intolerance, the main source of which today is in Kosovo. We must do everything to disarm the terrorists." The Yugoslav President added that, not only southern Serbia and Macedonia, but now also Greece, are threatened by Albanian KLA guerrillas seeking a "Greater Albania."

And on the same day that Putin made his proposal, Macedonia received a supply of weapons from Russia, including some of the most modern fighters and helicopter gunships, delivered after several acts of sabotage had held them up in Bulgaria. They give Macedonia a fighting chance: Its efforts to confront the logistically and technologically superior armaments of the KLA forces have been blocked by repeated interventions of "the international community."

More recently, the focus on economic cooperation has grown. At Dushanbe, Kyrgyz President Akayev proposed construction of a unified transportation network, and more rapid joint development of energy sources.

Now, these proposals are being activated. When the nations returned to Shanghai for this year's summit, they brought in Uzbekistan as a full member. The leaders signed the "Declaration of the Establishment of the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization'" and the "Shanghai Covenant on Cracking Down on Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism" on June 15. The Declaration stated that "the human race wants peace and development." The Shanghai Five nations "have demonstrated the enormous potential for countries with different civilization backgrounds and traditional cultures, to achieve coexistence in harmony and cooperation in unity, through mutual respect and mutual trust." Now, their policy is for "building a democratic, just, and rational international political and economic new order." There are to be yearly summits and regular meetings of the SCO heads of government. The Declaration especially commended the "Shanghai Spirit," of "mutual trust and respect for diverse civilizations, and quest for common development," as a "precious wealth"

for all the nations. This "will become the guiding principle for the mutual relationships between member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization."

Association Will Further Expand

The SCO is an open organization. It "wants all forms of dialogue, exchange and cooperation with other countries and international and regional organizations," and will "admit other countries as new members." The nations give "special importance to safeguarding regional security," and are now committed to "draw up outlines for long-term multilateral economic and trade cooperation."

In his welcoming speech, Jiang Zemin stated that the great contribution of the Shanghai Five had been to initiate a new type of "cooperation security." Now, with the "deep-rooted contradictions for world peace and development" and growing threats of terrorism and separatism, "various countries and regions are accelerating their steps of regional cooperation, which is an important trend in the development of modern international relations." Establishing the SCO marks "an historic step" by the "six good neighbors," he said. The cooperation among the neighbors, has not only