

# Yugoslav republics yearn for freedom, face war as communists disintegrate

by Aglaja Beyes and Rachel Douglas

The bloody conflict over Kosovo Province, the part of Serbia that is a Serb national shrine but has a majority Albanian ethnic population, has embroiled all Yugoslavia. On Feb. 20, the eight-member Presidency of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia announced its decision "to engage units of the Yugoslav Army in Kosovo, to protect constitutional order and prevent violence." Fierce fighting followed the arrival of new Army forces, as Albanian demonstrators defied a curfew and the Serbian republic leadership brandished a plan to ship 100,000 Serbs and Montenegrins back into the province.

Not only "constitutional order," but the very existence of Yugoslavia as a political entity are threatened in the intractable Kosovo dispute. On top of that, an intense political storm is sweeping the northwestern parts of Yugoslavia, the republics of Slovenia and Croatia, in another direction altogether.

For growing numbers of people in Slovenia and Croatia, the most urgent political question of the day is, "Is Yugoslavia located in Europe?" People there have been inspired by the revolutionary events throughout Eastern Europe, across Yugoslavia's borders to the north, and many yearn to replicate them.

## Slovenian split

In January, the League of Communists of Slovenia delegation walked out of the extraordinary 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). On Feb. 4, the Slovene Communists formalized their break, and declared themselves to be the LCS Democratic Renewal Party, no longer answerable to LCY central authority. They proclaimed, "The LCY as it was no longer exists. . . . Slovene Communists' individual membership in the LCY also ceases to exist. The Slovenia LC acts as an independent political organization with its own membership, program, and statute."

On April 8, Slovenia will hold elections, which observers have called "the first free and democratic elections" in Yugoslavia. These were set last year, when Slovenia became the first republic to permit the registration of multiple parties. Croatia followed suit.

Half a dozen political parties have been legalized in Slov-

enia. At the beginning of this year, five of them drew up a united opposition platform, under the name "Demos." Its composition reflects the West European political spectrum, and also bespeaks the inevitable: Every West European political tendency, including the Social Democracy and the radical environmentalists, wants to make political capital out of the changes in Slovenia, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The presidium of Demos consists of two people from each of the following parties: Democrats, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, Slovene Peasant Union, and Greens. The "operative leader," according to the Yugoslav press agency Tanjug, is a Social Democrat, Dr. Joze Pucnik, who just recently returned to Yugoslavia after years in exile in West Germany.

In a Jan. 20 interview with the West German daily *Die Welt*, the vice-president of Pucnik's Slovenian Social Democratic Party, Katja Boh, said that her party advocated "the tradition of European enlightenment," and believed that a transformation of Yugoslavia from federation to confederation would be an interim arrangement, before its "disintegration into separate states."

It was under pressure of the growth of the movement around Demos, that the Slovene Communists split with the LCY. Their behavior resembled that of the Lithuanian Communist Party, in that Baltic captive nation within the Soviet Union, which likewise made a "Damascus Road" conversion to champion of sovereignty and independence, from Moscow—in the face of a powerful, growing nationalist movement around Sajudis, the Lithuanian Popular Front. Slovene Communist leader Ciril Ribicic commented that the 14th LCY Congress, "with the changes in the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, [this was] the last chance for Yugoslav Communists to make a fundamental watershed toward multi-party pluralism."

The Slovene oppositionists were stunned by the Communists' shift. "They took up all our demands," exclaimed one puzzled opposition spokesman. At their December party conference, the Slovenian LC abandoned all Communist symbols. Their banner was blue with a yellow star, and the conference motto was "Europe Now." The delegates viewed a videotape praising the advantages of a united Western Europe, and listened to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," the theme

song of the anti-Bolshevik resistance from Beijing to Berlin.

Two weeks after the elections in Slovenia, elections in Croatia are to follow. Given that this republic is twice as large in size and population as Slovenia, these elections gain even greater significance. But Croatia's path to democracy is stony, since it was very thoroughly purged of open-minded opposition by 45 years of Communist rule. Political reform in Croatia is still blocked by the existence of a powerful secret service, a parliament dominated by Communists, laws forbidding the import of critical foreign press, etc.

Nevertheless, on Feb. 10 all the opposition parties of Croatia presented themselves for the first time publicly, in a roundtable before thousands of potential voters. Most of them had been legalized only one week before. This roundtable did not occur in Croatia's capital Zagreb, but in the West German city of Stuttgart; one-third of all Croats emigrated due to the destructive economic policies of the LCY, and Germany is one of the centers of the Croatian emigration. The forum was held in Stuttgart not only for this reason, but to avoid the organizational structure of the League of Communists, which until very recently was the umbrella for all public political meetings. Another aim was to pressure for the right of emigré Yugoslavs to vote, something which has been "forgotten" by the Communist administration, as the Communist representative in Stuttgart admitted to the several thousand boisterous Croats in the hall.

The largest opposition grouping in Croatia is the Croatian Democratic Community, headed by the former partisan general and dissident Franjo Tudjman. The CDC tallies 300,000 members, twice as many as the Communists.

In Slovenia, observers expect a coalition government by April, after a good electoral showing by the opposition. In Croatia, predictions are more difficult, but it is possible that the results will further transform all discussions about the future of Yugoslavia. On the agenda for this summer is the drafting of a new constitution, but nobody can predict just what Yugoslavia will look like by then, or if the nation will still exist in its present form.

## **Economic peril**

What is certain, is that Yugoslavia's economic crisis and the ever more fanatical campaigns by the Serbian leaders around party chief Slobodan Milosevic, imperil every fragile hope that a political turn toward Europe might promise a better life for Yugoslavia or its constituent republics. Indeed, Soviet and other forces opposed to the anti-communist revolution in Eastern Europe—and still more to the prospect of its leading to a rebirth of national sovereignty based on industrial development—may design to exploit civil war in Yugoslavia and continuing clashes in neighboring Romania, in order to destabilize the revolution on its southern flank.

Ante Markovic, Yugoslavia's prime minister, has taken a road to economic "Westernization" that guarantees nothing but disaster. Yugoslavia is the next most indebted East Euro-

pean country, after Poland. It has been paying interest and principal on a debt of approximately \$20 billion for over a decade, and still has a hard currency debt of approximately \$20 billion to be serviced. At the end of 1989, the Markovic government unveiled a brutal austerity program, worked out in coordination with the International Monetary Fund. Like Poland, Yugoslavia hired austerity specialist Jeffrey Sachs as a "special adviser" on the introduction of "free-market" mechanisms, and Markovic recently said that World Bank and IMF experts "would be called in to consolidate Yugoslav banks," according to Tanjug.

There were 1,900 strikes in Yugoslavia last year, and the government's scorecard acknowledged that the "greatest concentration of dissatisfaction was in the days when the government's new program was expected. . . . The reasons for dissatisfaction were basically similar—low personal incomes, the collectives' bad financial state, and disagreement with economic policy measures." In Serbia, 113 of the 631 strikes in 1989 took place during the last ten days of December, after the IMF-approved program was presented. In January, railroad engineers striking over wage demands "threatened to cause a total breakdown of all railway traffic in Yugoslavia," Tanjug said.

## **Bloodshed in Kosovo**

Last Dec. 1, Slovene authorities banned a march on Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, by Serbs and Montenegrins who intended to protest alleged Slovenian support for Albanian separatists in Kosovo. In retaliation for the prohibition of this demonstration, Serbian officials launched a boycott of goods from Slovenia. While this fueled the ferment that led to the Slovenian Communists' break, economically weak Serbia has hurt itself the most, by deprivation of Slovenian goods.

The latest decisions of Milosevic's group in Serbia betray an increasing irrationality. In an outburst of chauvinistic propaganda, the Serbian leadership announced that it will "reestablish" the Serb character of Kosovo Province, which is today 90% inhabited by Albanians. The Central Committee of the Serbian LC demanded in mid-February, that 300,000 Albanian "refugees" (actually, the resident population) be expelled from Kosovo. In their place, 100,000 Serbs and Montenegrins, who left Kosovo during the past decade of strife, are supposed to go back. On Feb. 3, Milosevic conferred with 50 businessmen and intellectuals, Serbs and Montenegrins who emigrated from Kosovo to Belgrade, Serbia. These 50 gentlemen, according to Radio Belgrade, "In the name of over 100,000 exiled Serbs and Montenegrins who live in the capital, informed him that they have decided to return to Kosovo."

The project is a charade, since Serbs who fled the life-threatening violence of Kosovo are hardly going to pack their bags and return *en masse* to Yugoslavia's poorest region, and into a totally Albanian environment. But to finance the

supposed relocation of population, every Serbian worker should pay 1% of his income into a special fund to build 30 factories in Kosovo—for Serbs only!

While the demagogue Milosevic paraded his Kosovo scheme, Serbian media publicized an even more radical chauvinist organization. On Jan. 6, Radio Belgrade reported that a group called the Sava Society had decided to transform itself into a party, Serbian National Renewal. Its program calls for restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia within borders “as they were when the Kingdom of Serbia joined Yugoslavia”—at the close of World War I—“of course, including Montenegro and Macedonia,” two of the six republics of Yugoslavia.

One week later, the Sava Society was banned in five districts, on grounds of its “negation of the existence of the Macedonian state, Montenegrin and Muslim nations, advocacy of a Serbia geographically defined by the ethnic distribution of Serbs, and inciting national hatred,” according to Tanjug. But on January 16, the Belgrade daily *Borba* reprinted another periodical’s interviews with Tudjman, Puksic, and the leader of the Serbian National Renewal, Vuk Draskovic. The paper editorially criticized “the resurrection of these parties, controversies, intrigues, and blood-drenching calls for rallies,” but then allowed Draskovic access to *Borba*’s wide readership, to say: “Everything we had in 1918 . . . will again be ours. In the West, we will capture the territories in which the Serbs were in the majority” before World War II. Draskovic listed regions within Croatia and other republics, which he said should become autonomous, Serb-administrated provinces.

Meanwhile, sporadic fighting in Kosovo flared into major unrest again in late February, and the Army and Air Force moved in. Former Kosovo LC chairman Azem Vlasi, an ethnic Albanian, is still on trial for high treason because he supported a strike. The 200,000-strong Democratic Alliance of Kosovo, the largest, still illegal opposition group in the province, is demanding an immediate end to martial law, release of all political prisoners, resignation of the Serbian-installed Kosovo leadership, and free elections.

Daily demonstrations against the Serbian leadership in Kosovo took place in early February, but were low-key, so as to avoid provoking the Serbs. In January, Serbian special police units had killed at least 17 mostly youthful demonstrators with shots at the back of the head at close range, and more victims were to follow in the coming weeks. When the Croatian paper *Vjesnik* reported this atrocity on the front page on Feb. 4, it created such an uproar that Slovenia publicly announced the withdrawal of all its policemen from Kosovo, while Croatia followed suit, but with no publicity.

Prime Minister Markovic has personally taken leadership of a commission to find a compromise in Kosovo. But the leadership of Serbia is reiterating almost daily, that they will “never give up Kosovo”—culminating in the abovementioned insane call for mass expulsions.

## Iran-Contra gang targets E. Europe

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The National Endowment for Democracy, the quasi-governmental, U.S.-financed organization which played an integral role in the Iran-Contra scam and helped to engineer the coup against Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos, has adopted a new focus for its so-called Project Democracy: Eastern Europe.

In recent months, the NED apparatus has significantly increased its operations in Eastern Europe, and is now laying plans for pouring even more money and manpower into the region. According to spokesman for several key NED branches—the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDIIA), and its Republican counterpart, NRIIA—the NED has reoriented the bulk of its programs from Asia and Ibero-America, to Eastern Europe.

The NED apparatus has a host of projects under way in various Eastern European states, centered on Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany, but also extending to Romania, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union.

Czechoslovakia is a chief NED target. The NED’s new organ, the *Journal of Democracy*, has managed to recruit President Vaclav Havel to its international advisory committee. Last month, the NDIIA’s vice-chairman Madeleine Albright—who helped draft the pro-Soviet platforms of former Democratic presidential candidates Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis—traveled to Prague, where she and other NDIIA experts gave advice to Havel’s government on how to run Czechoslovakia’s upcoming elections. An NDIIA team was to return to Prague at the end of February to finalize what other assistance it will provide.

The NDIIA is also sending a “survey mission” to East Germany shortly, to “explore the prospects” for developing its “democracy-building” programs there. The group’s chairman, Brian Atwood, was in Bonn in January for consultations with the three major party institutes, and planned to fly to East Germany in late February to meet with the heads of the principal parties, including SED party leader Gysi.

The NRIIA has also diverted over half of its resources from Ibero-America and the Caribbean to Eastern Europe over the past few months. According to its director, Keith Scheutte, the NRIIA financed a conference in Vienna two months ago, grandly entitled the First All-European Round Table, which brought together representatives of various Eastern European and Soviet opposition groups and Western conservative parties.