

will retaliate by heavy shelling of Tuzla or other densely populated areas.

In the second week of August, a significant advance was made by the Bosnian Armed Forces, when they finally succeeded in crushing the uprising by Fikret Abdic, a turncoat who had declared, in May 1993, a secessionist "Bosnian Republic of Bihac," and who had joined with the Serbian forces. Thousands of his supporters are now fleeing over the Croatian border, into Serbian-occupied territory of the Krajina. The heights around Tuzla are reported to have been retaken from the Serbs, and Bosnian gains are reported from the Vlasica area, near Zenica, and around Brcko, in spite of the fact that nothing beyond shoulder-held weapons, no heavy artillery, no mortars, no heavy matériel, is reaching the Bosnian Army in significant quantity.

U.S. policy inadequate

Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress and Senate do not appear to be operating on a mental timetable which would enable Bosnia to win the war, before a third icy winter sweeps into the grave hundreds of thousands of hapless men and women. To speak of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia by Oct. 15, or Nov. 15, or Thanksgiving Day, or whatever, is out of all reality, when 70% of Bosnia's territory is in the hands of the Serbians. For that reason, it has not, in most cases, been possible to sow any crops save kitchen gardens, and there has been very little harvest. Around all the cities, the trees have been cut down over the last two winters for firewood; there are no trees left to cut, no fuel, and no other means of heating. The Unprofor (U.N. "peacekeeping" force), which can cut off all convoy routes at the flick of a switch, since it controls all the nodal points of access to Bosnia by road, is a declared hostile force, composed almost entirely of British and French troops whose command is pro-Serbian, which means that food and medical supplies this winter will reach central Bosnia only at the grace and favor of Unprofor.

On Aug. 18, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher gave an interview to the London *Financial Times* on U.S. foreign policy, where he mentioned, in an aside, that Bosnia is "important, but not of vital interest to the U.S.A." Smooth and clever as he is, Mr. Christopher, who said in the same interview that we have to get away from "great principles" and back to the concept of "case law" in such matters, clearly knows a great deal less about the real stuff of international politics than does Pope John Paul II. On Sept. 8, the pope, accompanied by the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Elio Toaff, will visit Sarajevo, in spite of open threats on his life from Karadzic and from Metropolitan Jovan of the Orthodox Church of Slovenia and Croatia, and in spite of a torrent of abuse in the British and other press about a purported "Vatican-Muslim" alliance on this and other strategic issues such as the Cairo depopulation conference. John Paul II plans to celebrate Mass in Sarajevo stadium.

Russia accelerates neo-imperial drive

by Konstantin George

The neo-imperial direction in Russian policy has become more pronounced than ever, as a multitude of statements by Russian leaders during August attest. This has been timed with a view to distracting attention from the domestic socio-economic crisis. It has been tailored to a widespread belief among Russians and segments of the population in the non-Russian republics that their misfortunes are due, not to Moscow's shock therapy policies, but to the breakup of the U.S.S.R., and that a remedy can be found by creating a new Russian empire in the former Soviet Union.

Economic explosions are close at hand. The trigger for this is the inter-enterprise debt, which has risen astronomically alongside a collapse in production down to levels of the early 1970s. On Aug. 17, Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovyets, chairman of an emergency commission hastily put together by the regime this summer to deal with the debt, stated in a televised address that the total of inter-enterprise debt had reached 90,000 billion rubles. He warned that the industrial enterprises of Russia are on the brink of a chain reaction of bankruptcies, leading to closures and mass unemployment.

Soskovyets's policy shifts illustrate the quandary confronting the Russian government. On Aug. 17, he sounded like an official of the International Monetary Fund in his statements concerning debt-ridden enterprises: "The state must be very harsh with those companies that behave themselves badly in the transition to a market economy. . . . We cannot simply give them soft loans." He admitted that what he called a "further contradiction" in industrial production, is "inevitable." He also denounced the idea of state intervention to protect Russian producers from cheap foreign imports, endorsing the British doctrine of free trade: "We must not be confused by some pseudo-patriotic idea about defending our markets. The state cannot stem the inflow of foreign goods."

By Aug. 22, Soskovyets was denouncing radical free marketeers and attacking "those politicized economists who believe that the formation of a market should occur in circumstances of total chaos." He hinted that the government was considering wage and price controls, beginning with price ceilings on monopoly energy suppliers and transportation companies. On the same day, the Central Bank, trying to buy a little time, cut its three-month refinancing interest rate from 150% to 130%—the seventh cut this year and the second during August. However, it precipitated a new collapse of

the ruble, down to almost 2,200 to the dollar. Massive Central Bank selling of dollars the next day temporarily brought the ruble up to about 2,160 to the dollar.

What the Russian government approach overall will be to the crisis is not clear, but certain short-term policy aspects can be determined. First, a policy of trying to contain the collapse within the military-industrial complex (MIC), the most vital part of industry, is definitively in effect. This was denoted in an announcement by President Boris Yeltsin in mid-August granting 4,200 billion rubles in soft credits to the MIC for investments. Second, as Soskovyets stated on Aug. 22, Russia will pursue "a more severe policy with regard to the countries of the Near Abroad" (the non-Russian former Soviet republics) regarding their debts to Moscow, mostly for Russian energy deliveries. In short, the neo-imperial policy will be pursued vigorously.

Overseeing the 'Near Abroad'

The neo-imperial drive can be seen in a mid-August Russian Security Council document awaiting the signature of Yeltsin. It accords "highest priority" to Moscow's support for the 25 million ethnic Russians living in the non-Russian former Soviet republics. A commission, to be headed by the neo-imperialist Sergei Shakhrai, the former Russian minister for nationalities, is to oversee the condition of Russians living

in the Near Abroad.

In August, both Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Defense Minister Pavel Grachov supported creating a "Great Serbia" out of the planned partition of Bosnia. The summit between Yeltsin and new Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko cleared the path for an early consummation of a Russia-Belarus economic and monetary union. This was followed by the Russia-Moldova agreement on the withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army from Moldova. The agreement was a stinging defeat for Moldova, which had wanted Russia to leave by Jan. 1, 1996 at the latest. The agreement set a mid-1998 withdrawal, prolonging for three years a Russian military presence in that republic, which borders on the Balkans and Ukraine.

Moscow is trying to replicate its successes in Belarus and Moldova in consolidating its hold over the North Caucasus. The obstacle here for nearly the past three years has been the republic of Chechnya, which seceded from the Russian Federation in autumn 1991 under former Soviet Gen. Dzhokhar Dudayev. Throughout the summer, Russia has been increasing pressure on the Dudayev regime, through support for both the political and armed opposition within Chechnya, combined with military intimidation along the borders of the Chechen republic. This has included Russian helicopter drops of supplies and arms to guerrillas and financing of the opposition.

The political side of this operation, ironically, has featured Ruslan Khasbulatov, the ethnic Chechen who was the former head of the old Russian Supreme Soviet, which was destroyed in a sea of blood last October. Khasbulatov entered Chechnya in August and began a campaign calling on Dudayev to resign. On Aug. 22, Khasbulatov issued an ultimatum: "If he doesn't resign in the next days, on Aug. 25 many thousands of demonstrators will gather and decide the fate of Dudayev."

Reports abound of Russian troop concentrations along the borders of Chechnya, and a convoy of 30 Russian armored vehicles on Aug. 18 crossed into one district of Chechnya, reportedly to turn them over to armed Chechen opposition groups. Moscow would clearly prefer an internal overthrow, because the use of Russian troops would tend to unite the Chechens into armed resistance against Russia. Russia, which is already keeping 25,000 troops in Tajikistan to maintain the pro-Moscow regime in power, does not want a similar situation in the North Caucasus.

Moscow's top priority is the creation of, first, an economic entity, followed by political and military "union," among Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, which would form the core of a new empire. Powerful voices in Moscow are against any adventures that would detract from this goal. While Chechnya and Tajikistan make headlines, working groups in Moscow, Belarus, and Ukraine are fleshing out the economic, political, and military agreements that will launch the "Slavic Union."

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