

# The stakes in the Yugoslav civil war

by Uwe Friesecke

*The following has been excerpted and edited from a briefing given by Uwe Friesecke, a leader of the Schiller Institute in Germany and a longtime close associate of the American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, on Aug. 7 to the U.S. editors of EIR. A second segment, dealing with the social conflicts which have arisen in France and Germany, will appear in our next issue.*

The very dynamic is unfolding, against which Lyndon LaRouche warned since the beginning of the 1980s, when he warned about how the strategic situation could deteriorate. The question is not anymore, can the outbreak of that dynamic be prevented; now the question is, how far has that dynamic gone ahead, and can it be put back to where it was, at least? Not to speak of the question, can that dynamic be broken and a different dynamic for political stabilization put in its place?

Our warning of the impotence and failure of Western politics has been borne out. Compare the number of appeals which the European foreign ministers and various governments have addressed to the conflicting parties in Yugoslavia without any result. The last so-called peace initiative of the European foreign ministers was announced in the morning and then fell apart 2-3 hours later. Conventional policy—the diplomatic policy favored in the last couple of years, such as entrusting mechanisms like the CSCE with the task of avoiding military conflicts and solving political conflicts by political means—has failed.

The European foreign ministers can appeal for whatever they want to the Serbian government: Serbia thinks it has a strategic combination of possibilities, which gives it the unique chance to realize its thirst for a Greater Serbian empire.

Will this military conflict take on its own unstoppable dynamic, and will that dynamic draw in forces which could work as the ignition point in an area which has the highest density of the world of the two superpowers confronting each other directly?

About two years after the processes which led to the revolution in eastern Europe, where so-called détente and

peace had broken out forever, we are right in the middle of the *worst* potential for a global military conflict. All the potential is being collected in Europe, to turn a situation which was potentially the beginning of the most peaceful developments in Europe, 180 degrees around, into the outbreak of the most catastrophic military conflict leading into whatever form a new world war might take.

## What independence means to Croatia and Slovenia

The political elites in Croatia and Slovenia aspiring to their freedom and their sovereignty and independence, are not necessarily the governments right now. They are mostly groups of wise people in the background, especially those who have set up and directed the militias in both countries; they are *as committed to their independence fight as the Baltics are, especially as Lithuania is*. Their idea is that it is a unique chance which was played into their hands by history, like the unique chance which was seized upon by people in east Germany, and that they will use this unique chance to fight for their freedom and independence, and that they will not stop.

If the Serbians are trying to establish Greater Serbia—and I don't think one could count on the Serbians stopping after they reach the Adriatic—it means that we will be looking, minimally, at a guerrilla war. The Serbians, the “tank communists,” as they are rightfully called, are committed 100% to crushing the Croats, and the Croats say this is our last chance for acquiring freedom and liberty in history, and we will not give this up.

Therefore, you have a war in the middle of Europe, where everybody has been taught for the last 40 years that World War II was the last war in Europe. Now, in *neighborhoods which have lived together relatively peacefully over decades, hate has taken over and the different groups are fighting each other to the death*.

These events come in the wake of the changes in Europe, which had the potential to take the strategic initiative away from the design of “Europe 1992” under the complete control of the cartels and the political orientation of the Anglo-American power group; the possibility that, against those designs, a more central Europe-designed and -oriented policy would be hegemonic for Europe, and counterbalance the Anglo-American strategic position.

Croatia and Slovenia's natural economic ties would be to Austria and Germany. So, with the recognition of the independence of these two countries and these two peoples, you would not only accept as the highest principle of international diplomacy the principles of freedom and sovereignty—the idea of the American Declaration of Independence, that whenever the people want to throw off the chains of oppression, this is justified by principles of natural law. But you would also have a concrete shift in the correlation of forces, as Europe affects the world strategic picture. You

would suddenly add to the political power of a united Germany involved in economic cooperation with Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and further on with Russia, a very significant area which is the bridge between most of western Europe and central Europe and the Balkans, and the bridge between northern Italy and Poland and Ukraine and Russia.

This would increase the relative weight of that political constellation vis-à-vis the Anglo-American power group. It would establish the principle that the future of Europe is based on the principle of freedom of the people, and of the sovereignty of individual nations. This would not break up the process of unifying Europe; but it would break up the design of "Europe 1992," which has already essentially fallen apart, because the grand illusion was based on an alliance for this between France and Germany. That alliance has fallen apart.

### Behind the Bush-Gorbachov summit

If Gorbachov on the one side, and Bush on the other, were to allow the independence of Croatia and Slovenia to go through successfully *as those people have demanded*, they would be tolerating again what started with the liberation of East Germany. They would again set a precedent that higher principles of natural law are the ones to which nations and peoples, if they are suppressed, can call upon, and have the right to organize their own affairs. It is that principle which they cannot tolerate—neither Gorbachov for the new order of the Soviet Empire which he's trying to manipulate, nor Bush for his new world order.

If the Soviets were to tolerate intervention by a west European military force against the Serbians, what would happen if a similar situation were to arise in the Baltics? If the Soviets were to tolerate the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, what effect would this have on Ukraine, Armenia, the Baltics, and other republics? In Bush's case, something else would happen with the independence of Croatia and Slovenia: Who would pay the debt? The debt is attached to the unified country called Yugoslavia. The Slovenians and Croatians wouldn't pay it.

German Foreign Minister Genscher is coming up with proposals which go in the right direction. His proposal, that Croatia and Slovenia should be recognized, and that the Europeans should check whether they could deploy a military operation into there, are surprisingly favorable to the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. The more sophisticated press in Germany, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, was a clear proponent of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia.

But Germany's maneuvering room is very limited. Genscher almost caused a diplomatic incident two weeks ago at the European foreign ministers' meeting where they called in the Serbian government and refused to invite the Croatians and Slovenians. Genscher demanded a clarification as to who had sabotaged this. But France is against recognizing Croatia and Slovenia; the British, and seemingly, the Dutch foreign

minister, who is handling this *troika* which tried to come up with a peace initiative, is against a clear-cut vote of the European Community. The most absurd announcement came recently from the foreign minister of Luxembourg, who said we cannot have the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, because this would be a precedent for "little states" in Europe to demand their rights.

### Instability in eastern Europe

The most devastated economic situation we see in Poland. Entire industrial companies simply have no work, and no money to pay their labor. One of the biggest markets for Polish firms was optical equipment for Warsaw Pact forces. That market has disappeared. There are reports that the Polish TV will not be able to operate any longer because they cannot pay their workers and their programs. We all know the infamous fate of the Ursus factory.

What is happening in Poland is a dramatic shift away from the official economy into the black economy—there is, for example, a significant increase of those who are trying to go to the West, let's say east Germany. There is a slide into social and moral degeneration as a consequence of the economic disaster. The very institution which brought President Lech Walesa to power is being discredited, as is Walesa himself. If this continues, we may see social eruptions in which Walesa may be forced to declare a state of emergency and use troops against those very people who formed the basis for the peaceful changes in the first place.

Czechoslovakia has economically dramatically deteriorated. But the area where we have to look for the real trouble, is Russia and the Soviet Union itself. The arrangement Gorbachov and Yeltsin have found so far, is not based on too much solidity—simply because Yeltsin was carried into his position especially by the hope for an improvement in the economic situation.

Yeltsin will not be able to deliver on this; and therefore, it is a question of months, during which his reputation is going to be destroyed. The effect Yeltsin has had so far, to calm down the miners' strike, to calm down the tensions between Lithuania and Russia, and to put some type of institutional control represented in the acceptance of the Union Treaty, will, in all likelihood, be exploded by the underlying process of economic catastrophe. This is obviously something the Harvard boys don't take into account. What they are prescribing for Gorbachov is exactly the medicine which will be the end of Gorbachov and this whole fragile setup.

We have to project that the impact of IMF austerity demands, the impact of free trade policies on eastern Europe can become much more dramatic than they already have been in Yugoslavia, and can bring into the powderkeg of Yugoslavia other conflicts of ethnic rivalries and tensions which then can become the material for an uncontrolled process of political, social, and then military tensions on a much larger scale than just the Balkans.—*To be continued.*