

Kosovo secession linked to NATO expansion

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The U.S. calls it “Operation Status.” The United Nations calls it “The Ahtisaari Plan.” It is the U.S./NATO “independence” project for Kosovo, which has been a province of Serbia since the 14th century. With NATO’s 17,000 troops backing it, Kosovo’s government is set to secede on Feb. 6, declaring itself a separate country.

Kosovo’s president is Hashim Thaci, who was the leader of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK for its Albanian initials), which U.S. diplomat Robert Gelbard called “terrorist” in 1998, just before the U.S. started funding the UCK to use it against Yugoslavia. Thaci, whose UCK code name was “Snake,” and his UCK cronies are well funded by drug running and the European sex trade.

In a series of wars and coercive diplomacy in the 1990s, the U.S. government and the European NATO powers backed the secession of four republics of Yugoslavia, a sovereign socialist state. It took another 78 days of NATO bombing in 1999, aggression that President Bill Clinton described as “humanitarian,” and a coup financed by the National Endowment for Democracy and other imperialist agencies in 2000, to install a pro-western regime in Serbia that was open to Western intervention and privatization.

State resources were privatized. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was almost totally dismantled politically and economically.

But the U.S. then moved to break up the rest of Yugoslavia. Through lies and raw military power, the U.S. supported a pro-imperialist group of gangsters—the UCK—in the war against Yugoslavia, and this gang then took over Kosovo.

Then the U.S. supported UCK moves to detach Kosovo, where the U.S. had built the massive military base “Bondsteel.” Washington and its NATO allies allowed this criminal element to drive over 200,000 Serbs, Roma people and other minorities out of Kosovo, and terrorize the impoverished Albanian population.

Wealth and poverty in Kosovo

Kosovo is sitting on fifteen billion tons of brown coal. Its mines contain 20 billion tons of lead and zinc and fifteen billion tons of nickel. EU and U.S. corporations are going to buy Kosovo as soon as its status is settled as “independent.” (Inter Press Service Italy, Jan. 15)

But in Stari Trg, the most profitable state-owned mine in former Yugoslavia, inactive since 1999, rich with lead, zinc, cadmium, gold and silver, unemployment is above 95 percent. With unemployment high, wages will be low, and profits fabulous.

In Kosovo half of the population doesn't get enough to eat. Unemployment hovers near 60 percent (IHT Jan. 28). Kosovo Albanians in the U.S. or Europe send home 450 million euros in remittances each year, half of Kosovo's entire budget. "I don't know how we would survive without this," said economist Ibrahim Rexhepi. (Deutsche Welle, Jan 27).

An Albanian living in New York told Workers World recently that he knows many families in Kosovo and Albania that have had to sell their daughters to get the remittances from their work in the sex trade. "Unemployment is so high that most people are poor, and many bought into the Ponzi scheme in 1997 that robbed most Albanians at home and in Kosovo of their entire life savings."

The U.N. Charter forbids the forced breakup of nations, and U.N. Security Council resolution 1244 guarantees the territorial integrity of Serbia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Kosovo independence "is fraught with serious damage for the whole system of international law, negative consequences for the Balkans and the whole world and for the stability in other regions." (Interfax, Jan. 25)

The U.S. and its NATO partners are ignoring legalities. But they have to pay attention to the possibility of Serbia making energy deals with Russia. The two countries agreed to build a large gas storage facility in Serbia, while Russia's state-controlled oil concern Gazprom signed an agreement granting Gazprom control of 51 percent of Serbia's state-owned oil-refining monopoly NIS. The Russians have commenced work on the South Stream gas pipeline through Serbia to supply southern Europe.

The U.S. and the EU have been working feverishly on the rival Nabucco pipeline to cut European dependence on Russian energy (Reuters, Jan 25).

Kosovo and NATO growth

The Kosovo crisis has prompted leading Serbian presidential candidate Tomislav Nikolic, of the Radical Party, to suggest the creation of a Russian military base in his country. (Itar-Tass, Jan. 25).

Why is Kosovo so crucial to NATO expansion?

The creation of Kosovo as an "independent" state would be a precedent for other schemes U.S. imperialism could take advantage of to break away areas of other sovereign nations, including China and Russia, applying the old "divide and conquer" strategy perfected by British imperialism.

The Russian and Chinese governments both have spoken out against the Ahtisaari plan.

Russia's foreign minister Sergy Lavrov said NATO's buildup in Eastern Europe and

the ex-Soviet republics are "a process of territorial encroachment similar to what Napoleon and Hitler failed to achieve by cruder means." (Voice of Russia, June 28, 2007)

The planned NATO/U.S. plot to make Kosovo independent is a continuation of NATO military expansionism to ensure U.S. economic control in Eastern Europe. NATO is the military arm of international capital on five continents. Popular opposition is rising in Serbia, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Ukraine, Afghanistan and Africa.

But anywhere NATO tries to go, resistance grows. The secession of Kosovo may still blowback to haunt the imperialists.

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