

US, NATO prepare public opinion for ground war against Serbia

The Editorial Board
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Less than one week ago, according to no less an authority than President Bill Clinton, most Americans had never heard of Kosovo and would not know where to find it on a world map.

Now, after several days of massive bombing, the escalating media campaign over the fate of the Kosovan Albanians is setting the stage for the commitment of US troops in the war against Serbia and the long-term military occupation of Kosovo.

In an article that is typical of what has been appearing in American newspapers and television over the last three days, Charles A. Kupchan, who served on the staff of the National Security Council during Clinton's first term, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*:

"Now that the air campaign is underway, the president has no choice but to prepare the country and America's armed forces for a major ground war in the Balkans ...

"Air attacks will no doubt weaken Yugoslav defenses and soften up the units operating in and around Kosovo. But it may take ground forces to expel them from Kosovo and stop the killing of Albanians."

In interviews conducted on national television, two leading senators--Shelby of Alabama and McCain of Arizona--stated that the Clinton administration must be prepared to place troops on the ground in Kosovo. "I don't know myself of any war," Shelby said, "that's been totally won by air power." Warning that the desire to avoid casualties should not determine US strategic aims, McCain declared, "We're in it, and we have to win it. This means we have to exercise every option."

While the Clinton administration continues to state that it does not "intend" to order ground forces into battle, it has signaled an impending change in policy by claiming that the violence of Serb army attacks on Kosovan Albanians has come as a surprise. If this were

true, it would mean that the policy pursued by the Clinton administration in launching the bombing was not merely reckless, but also extraordinarily stupid. It is, however, impossible to believe that the tragic events that have been the first fruits of this war were not foreseen by the US government.

The very nature of the US-NATO demands--that Serbia cede control of Kosovo, acquiesce in the expulsion of the Serb minority from the province, submit to foreign occupation and the destruction of its national sovereignty, and accept the revision of its international borders--could not but lead to an eruption of violence against the Kosovan Albanians once full-scale war broke out.

It is the height of cynicism for the United States to feign horrified surprise over the fate of the Kosovan Albanians when similar methods were employed by Croatia, with US political support and military assistance, during the Croatian offensive against Serbs in Krajina province in 1995. As even the *New York Times* admits, "the West looked the other way" as 200,000 Serbs were "ethnically cleansed" from Krajina and tens of thousands more were driven from their homes in Bosnia because the actions of Croatia served the strategic interests of the United States.

It would not be difficult to prove that the Clinton administration's invocation of "human rights" and "self-determination" as a justification for its onslaught against Serbia is shot through with duplicity and hypocrisy. (We invite our readers to review an earlier article, "Whom will the United States bomb next?")

But what concerns us here are the implications of the accelerating pace and escalating scale of US military violence. Serbia is the fourth country to have been bombed by the United States in less than seven months. Since August 1998, US cruise missiles and bombs have

been launched against the Sudan, Afghanistan, and, of course, Iraq.

The war against Serbia promises to become the bloodiest and most ambitious exercise of all. This extraordinary projection of US military power portends a major turning point in the history of American imperialism.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, US government, military and academic think tanks have been engaged in a protracted debate over the extent and potential of American hegemony. A continuous source of frustration has been the persistent and widespread opposition within the United States, despite the outcome of the gulf war, to foreign military engagements.

With increasing frequency articles are appearing in policy journals deriding this opposition as an unfortunate legacy of isolationist traditions and the Vietnam debacle, and making blunt declarations that the United States must be willing to use its vast power to secure and defend its global interests.

A significant attempt to provide a popular justification for imperialist militarism appeared in the influential *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. The *Times'* principal columnist on foreign affairs, Thomas Friedman, argued that the aggressive use of American military power is the natural corollary of US preeminence in the new globalized economy.

"As the country that benefits most from global economic integration, we have the responsibility of making sure that this new system is sustainable. This is particularly important at a time when the world has been--and will continue to be--rocked by economic crises that can spread rapidly from one continent to another ...

"Sustaining globalization is our overarching national interest ... Globalization-is-US."

And in his most provocative remarks, Friedman declared:

"The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist--McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.... Without America on duty, there will be no America Online."

For all its smug self-satisfaction, Friedman's article is

significant in that it highlights the indissoluble link between economic globalization and the drive of the United States to world hegemony. In contrast to all other major capitalist powers which--in deference to historical experience and present conditions--are obliged to place certain limits on their ambitions, the American bourgeoisie interprets its activities in uniquely global terms. The integration of global markets is conceived of as being synonymous with the domination of American transnational corporations. The triumph of world capitalism is seen as the triumph of the United States.

Some 65 years ago, in a brilliant insight into the dynamic of American imperialism, Leon Trotsky wrote: "For Germany it was a question of 'organizing Europe.' The United States must 'organize' the world. History is bringing humanity face to face with the volcanic eruption of American imperialism."

That day is now at hand.



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