

How the Balkan war was prepared

Rambouillet Accord foresaw the occupation of all Yugoslavia

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Also in Serbo-Croatian

The refusal of the Milosevic government to sign the Rambouillet Accord provided NATO with official justification for its war against Yugoslavia. For a long time, however, the precise contents of this accord were unknown. The Contact Group, responsible for the talks at Rambouillet and Paris, had agreed to remain silent. The complete text was only recently published on the Internet site of the Albanian Kosova Crisis Center.

As can now be seen, the accord contains provisions that would have subjected the whole of Yugoslavia to NATO occupation. The official presentation repeatedly stated that it was a matter of autonomy for Kosovo, which would be secured by the stationing of a "peace force" in Kosovo. However, Appendix B, "Status of Multi-National Military Implementation Force", grants NATO freedom of movement "throughout all Yugoslavia", i.e., Serbia and Montenegro as well as Kosovo.

The text of Article 8 of this Appendix reads: "NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, maneuver, billet, and utilization of any areas or facilities as required for support, training, and operations."

Article 6 guarantees the occupying forces absolute immunity: "NATO personnel, under all circumstances and at all times, shall be immune from the Parties' jurisdiction in respect of any civil, administrative, criminal, or disciplinary offenses which may be committed by them in the FRY."

Article 10 secures NATO the cost-free use of all Yugoslavian streets, airports and ports.

If the Yugoslav government had signed the accord, they would have been relinquishing all claims to sovereignty over their own territory. The *Berliner Zeitung* noted, "This passage sounds like a surrender treaty following a war that was lost ... The fact that Yugoslavian President Milosevic did not want to sign such a paper is understandable."

The way in which the Yugoslav government was called upon to sign this diktat--delivered as an ultimatum--and the secretiveness regarding its content, suggest that the Rambouillet and Paris conferences were aimed at providing a pretext for war, not a political solution to the Kosovo conflict.

"An accord such as this could not be signed by any head of a sovereign state," commented the radical newspaper *Taz*, the first German paper to publish passages from the Accord itself.

"If the talks had really had the aim of producing agreement, and not merely trying to convince skeptics of the unavoidability of NATO's attacks, then the text of the Accord is incomprehensible."

The original proposal of the Contact Group, which served as the basis for the Rambouillet Conference, did not contain these passages. The negotiations were first supposed to deal with the question of Kosovar autonomy, and only then take up the question of the military measures to be implemented to carry this out. This was the basis for the Yugoslav government participating in the conference.

In the course of negotiations, which lasted from February 6 to 23, the five Western members of the Contact Group--the US, Britain, Germany, France and

Italy--moved openly to embrace the standpoint of the Kosovar Albanians, who insisted on the stationing of NATO troops inside Kosovo. On the final day of the conference, the final draft of the Accord was presented containing the Appendix B quoted above.

From then on, the draft statutes covering Kosovar autonomy--to which the Yugoslavian government had largely agreed--and the proposals for stationing NATO troops inside Kosovo were characterised as an "indissoluble packet". The Yugoslav delegation was given the bald choice of either swallowing the ultimatum or rejecting the Accord as a whole, which they then did.

To the surprise of NATO, the Kosovar Albanians also refused to sign up. The conference was consequently adjourned again, until the Kosovars signed the same text on March 18. NATO had obtained the pretext it wanted to launch its attack. On March 24, the first bombs were dropped.

It would appear that not a few politicians who bear responsibility for launching the war were uninformed about this sequence of events. They agreed to the attack on Yugoslavia without even having read the text that was used to justify it. NATO's campaign of disinformation, which has accompanied the war from its inception, is not only directed at the general public, but at parliamentarians and senior state officials.

According to the *Taz* newspaper, which made inquiries at the German Foreign Ministry, two of the three most senior officials--State Minister Günther Verheugen (a Social Democrat) and Ludger Volmer (a Green)--were completely surprised. They claimed that the Articles in Appendix B were "completely new" to them. The third official--Permanent Secretary Wolfgang Ischinger--claimed that the passages came from an earlier, no longer current, version of the Accord, which is clearly refuted by the facts.

The *Taz* article asks, how much did Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer know? They raise another possibility: "Did the Federal Government deliberately pull the wool over the eyes of parliament and the public"

Many parliamentary deputies have expressed anger regarding the Government's game of hide-and-seek. The text of the Accord was only officially presented to the German parliament last Thursday, more than two weeks after the war had started.

Angelika Beer wrote a letter to her Green Party

colleague, Joschka Fischer, saying she would have spoken out against the air attacks if she had known about the content of the Accord.

Social Democratic Party deputy Hermann Scheer said, "If we had been able to read this paper as soon as it was ready, then the argument that all political and diplomatic manoeuvres had been exhausted and all that remains is the threat of bombardment would not have been tenable."

Scheer accuses the Government of accepting the fact that the USA exerts too strong an influence over NATO decision-making.



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