

Balkan war

Embassy protests reflect deeper currents

Editorial Board
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Demonstrations continued into a third day outside the US embassy in Beijing and American consulates and offices in other Chinese cities. While the numbers were reduced from Sunday's massive crowds, thousands took part in the protests on the first work day after the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

Students, workers, pensioners, even Tibetan monks stopped to light incense and pay their respects to large photographs of the three Chinese citizens, all journalists covering the war on Yugoslavia, who were killed by American bombs.

Protests over the bombing of the Chinese embassy have taken place in front of American embassies and consulates in many parts of the world, from Copenhagen, Denmark to Vientiane, Laos. In Asia, there were demonstrations in Bangkok, Singapore, Tokyo, Tel Aviv and Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Demonstrators burned American flags and threw eggs at the American mission in Taipei, capital of Taiwan, where the right-wing Kuomintang established its rule in 1949 after its defeat by Mao Tse-tung.

There were also large antiwar demonstrations in two NATO capitals, with 5,000 marching in London and more than 10,000 in Berlin. And Moscow saw the largest anti-NATO demonstration since the beginning of the bombing campaign seven weeks ago.

While the size and composition of the demonstrations varied, the protests are a sign of how the war in the Balkans has begun to shift international public opinion dramatically. In country after country, the NATO gang-up against Yugoslavia is seen as a warning of the aggressiveness and ruthlessness of the major imperialist powers, especially the United States.

The contrast in China is especially stark. Ten years ago, during the demonstrations which preceded the Tiananmen Square massacre, Chinese students were full of illusions in the democratic character of American imperialism, to the point that they placed a replica of the Statue of Liberty at the center of the square. In the current protests, Chinese students and workers have been seen carrying posters depicting the American flag with swastikas in the place of stars.

This is not simply an expression of revulsion over one incident involving Chinese citizens. It is part of a deeper and broader reaction to the overall pattern of American bullying and

exploitation against all the countries of east and southeast Asia. The masses throughout the region have been hard-hit by US-backed IMF austerity plans and threats of trade warfare in the nearly two years since the eruption of financial and currency turmoil in Thailand.

Moreover, the bombing of a small and virtually defenseless country by a coalition of the most powerful imperialist powers necessarily arouses anger at the aggressor and sympathy towards the victim among tens of millions of people in the former colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Monday saw the opening of proceedings before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, on Yugoslavia's application for a finding that the US-NATO assault is a violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. Yugoslav officials charged that the NATO countries "are deliberately inflicting living conditions intended to achieve the partial or total destruction of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."

While US and NATO officials have dismissed the Yugoslav case with derision, there is little question that the bombing campaign represents a sharp turn in the international behavior of the imperialist powers, who were compelled during the post-World War II period to recognize the political independence of vast regions of the world which they once ruled directly as colonial possessions.

By intervening into the civil war in the Kosovo province of Yugoslavia, and bombing the Belgrade regime after it refused to accept a US-dictated settlement, the NATO allies are laying down a precedent which is ominously familiar to a majority of the world's people.

They are declaring that a handful of powerful and wealthy countries in North America and Western Europe shall have the right to declare the sovereignty of an independent country null and void. There is talk of establishing a colonial-style "protectorate" in Kosovo.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin took note of this trend in a telephone conversation with Russian President Boris Yeltsin later made public, when he decried the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as "absolute gunboat diplomacy."

Addressing an emergency session of the UN Security Council, the Iraqi ambassador, Dr. Saeed Hasan, called the

embassy bombing a "barbaric action which violates the charter of the United Nations. Who knows which of the peoples of the third world will be the next victims?"

But it was not only the representatives of countries which have already been the target of American bombs who have expressed anger and concern over the direction of US foreign policy. One of the most withering characterizations of the US and NATO policy came in a commentary published in *The Times of India* Monday, by Siddharth Varadarajan.

The writer cites the new "Strategic Concept" adopted at NATO's 50th anniversary conference in Washington on the weekend of May 1-2. "The acrid smell of cordite hung over the participants as plans were drawn up for the future of not just NATO but the world," he wrote.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has extended its geographical scope far beyond North America and Western Europe, into regional conflicts, ethnic and religious rivalries and territorial disputes, or even "inadequate or failed efforts at reform" and "uncontrolled movement of large numbers of people" which may "pose problems for security and stability affecting the alliance."

Varadarajan commented, "Every country on the 'periphery of NATO' or 'beyond alliance territory' should make sure none of the above crises hits it or else it could find itself in the firing line of cruise missiles and smart bombs."

The new NATO strategy calls for operations which "may need to be undertaken with no, or only limited access to existing NATO infrastructure," clearly suggesting regions far beyond the Balkans. Noting that one of NATO's key goals is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Varadarajan suggests that India itself, which has recently tested missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons, could become a NATO target.

The Indian commentator notes the typical double standard of American and European powers, who condemn possession of nuclear weapons by other countries, but declare that they themselves must not only possess them but retain the right to use them in a first strike or as tactical weapons against a conventionally armed enemy.

He concludes: "NATO's nuclearism, its aggressive self-image, and its conduct in Yugoslavia can only inspire anxiety in those who believe in peace and democracy. The new Strategic Concept is a nihilist text, filled with destructive intent. It is as if its authors have learned nothing from the history of the millennium--or even century--which is just about to end."

The degree of alarm expressed in this bourgeois newspaper, a major voice of the Indian political establishment, is quite striking. All the more so because Mr. Varadarajan has simply done what any serious analyst must--but which no commentator in the American or European mass media has attempted--take seriously NATO's official strategic perspective and work through its global implications in the light of the Yugoslavia war.

The ThisTimes ~~comment~~^{commentary} *India* is in the which an intelligent observer makes of the extraordinary escalation of both military action and bellicose rhetoric on the part of American ruling circles. More of both were in evidence this weekend. In the war, NATO bombers continued their attacks, focused on other Serbian cities rather than Belgrade, and NATO's commander sought a further expansion of the scope of the attack on Yugoslavia. General Wesley Clark requested authority to station rocket batteries along Serbia's borders, some of them on the territory of Croatia, others in Hungary and Bosnia.

War fever continues to rage in the elite media and among many Washington politicians. *The New York Times* published a long article in its Week in Review section Sunday, headlined "What It Would Take To Cleanse Serbia," which called for a NATO conquest of Serbia and the establishment of an occupation government, on the model of Germany or Japan after World War II. Two US senators and former Republican presidential candidate Robert Dole echoed that view in an appearance on the NBC News program "Meet the Press."

Even more extraordinary was the tone of outrage adopted by media commentators and politicians over the alleged Chinese government failure to protect the American embassy in Beijing from Chinese demonstrators, as though protests and rock-throwing far outweighed the bombing and murder in Belgrade.

This double standard is more remarkable when one considers the US reaction after terrorist bombs hit American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last August. The Clinton administration immediately fired cruise missiles at sites in Sudan and Afghanistan, which it claimed--with little or no evidence--were linked to those who planted the bombs.

Even more grotesque was the editorial in Monday's *Wall Street Journal*, which dismissed the demonstrations in Beijing, on the grounds that "the Chinese people have been fed a steady diet of anti-NATO propaganda"--unlike the pro-NATO propaganda which fills the American media.

The *Journal* suggested that the deaths in the Belgrade embassy were actually the result of an insidious Chinese plot: "An obvious question may dawn on the Chinese people eventually: Why, in the middle of such a war, did their government choose to keep all those people in its embassy and potentially in harm's way?"

Such statements are the product of a ruling class that has lost its bearings and which has embarked on a course of militarism and aggression that can only end in a bloody disaster.



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