

In defence of the Serbs and a warning on military intervention

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From Mr Dragoslav Bijelic.

Sir, I was appalled by your editorial, "The challenge for Yugoslavia", (June 26). It was packed with untruths and distortions of facts. You claim that Mr Milosevic's policy has brought about the break-up of Yugoslavia; this is not true. It was the Slovenian and Croatian governments of Milan Kucan and Franjo Tudman, respectively, who, with the secessionist and anti-Serbian policies, brought the country to the edge of catastrophe.

You failed to remind your readers that the post-war Yugoslavia was governed for 36 years by the communist dictator Tito, who was a Croat. Also, you stated that Milosevic "opposes any break-up of federation, essentially because it would erode Serbia's influence". What influence? The current president of the Yugoslav federation, Stipe Mesic, is a Croat, as is the prime minister, Ante Markovic. Budmir Loncar, the federal minister, and General Veljko Kadijevic, the federal defence minister, are also Croats. The last three Yugoslav prime ministers were Croats.

In your article you plead for Yugoslavia to be reorganised

on a confederal basis. Every first-year law student knows that confederacy is not a state, but a loose union of sovereign, independent states.

You seem to forget that unified Germany will have free access to the Mediterranean via the Slovenia and Croatian/Dalmatian coast. The Germans will make a confederation, comprising Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Croatia and Slovenia, and eventually they will successfully attain by peaceful means what they could not by military means in two world wars - dominate Europe economically and politically.

It is not Mr Milosevic who has reawakened the idea of a greater Serbia, because the Serbs are already living within one state called Yugoslavia; and they do not want to become a minority in some new, right wing, chauvinistic Croatia.

I think that, instead of provoking bad feelings among Serbs, you should bear in mind that it is the Serbs who are the only true allies of the British people in the Balkans.

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From Branka Magas.

Sir, a military coup has taken place in Yugoslavia - the first in Europe since the Greek colonels' coup of 1967. Acting unconstitutionally and in defiance of the civilian authorities, the so-called Yugoslav People's Army has declared an all-out war on one part of Yugoslavia, treating it as a foreign enemy. Europe - east and west - should search its conscience and its common sense to decide whether allowing a military junta to take power anywhere in Europe augurs well for the continent's future. If in Yugoslavia today, why not in the Soviet Union tomorrow?

In pursuing their holy war against Slovenia and Croatia - a war planned ever since multi-party elections took place in these two republics - the so-called Yugoslav general staff are in fact waging war on Yugoslavia as a whole. Who, or what, has given these generals and colonels the right to decide for themselves how the Yugoslavs should arrange their future? And what kind of Yugoslavia could emerge out of their victory? Only a prison-house of its nations and citizens (occupied Kosova has

stood as the model for two years now).

Indeed, on the very day the so-called Yugoslav chief of staff was offered the hospitality of Serbia's state-controlled media to proclaim a war to the finish against the Slovene people, Serb mothers were protesting in the Serbian assembly against their sons' lives being used as small change in this adventure of the generals.

In what sense, therefore, can we speak of this army as a Yugoslav army? It is Yugoslav only in that it has compelled thousands of Slovene, Croat, Serb, Albanian, Macedonian, Moslem, Montenegrin etc conscripts to kill and maim each other, while offering them no future other than that of prolonged and bloody civil strife. What a tragedy for a country born out of a national liberation war. Whatever mistakes the governments of Slovenia and Croatia have made in their pursuit of sovereignty, they pale into insignificance besides the military's brutal assault upon the liberties and democratic aspirations of all the peoples of Yugoslavia. Branka Magas,
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