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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director for Central Intelligence

FROM: Roger Z. George
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SUBJECT: Serbia and the Russian Problem

1. As you prepare for meetings this week regarding the Balkan problem and its "solutions," we believe it is important to sensitize the new policy-making team to the growing danger of Russian alienation from a Western policy toward Serbia. US policy deliberations, as mentioned in the latest NSC tasking may focus heavily on "stopping Serbian aggression" or "rolling back Serbian conquests." As Russian centrist deputy Evigeniy Kozhokin told us late last week, such an approach, targetted solely at Serbia, will widen the differences.

2. This problem has been brewing for sometime, but may now be seen more clearly, as the latest Croatian-sponsored fighting has stimulated Russian proposals for sanctions against Croatia to create more of an even-handed approach to the crisis.

3. While the US cannot mortgage its Yugoslav policy to Russia, Washington should probably work harder at consulting Moscow before new policies are established. Moreover, we may find the best course will be one that tries to orchestrate our respective influence with the warring parties -- taking advantage of Russian ties to Serbs -- rather than allowing these historical relations to work against an effective international response.

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4. The attached memo explains why Russian unease over Western policy toward Serbia may well lead to a veto of UNSC resolutions on the use of force.

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SERBIA AND THE RUSSIAN PROBLEM

As reported by our embassy in Moscow and various other observers, the Russian government has grown increasingly concerned about the possible use of force against Serbia. There are five driving forces behind the concern:

Empathy for Serbia. The government and moderate politicians recognize that the Serbs are committing abominable actions. They also want Russian policy to remain in synch with that of the West. They feel, however, that the West is painting the situation in black and white terms, rather than recognizing that all warring parties must share some of the blame -- a view which also is held by the Intelligence Community.

Logic of Border Changes. The Russians also believe that Serbia has a case for some border revisions. When Yugoslavia existed as one country, the current borders were primarily administrative and made some sense within the logic of the confederation. According to the Russian view, now that the country has split asunder, the West should listen to Serbia's case for some revisions.

Pseudo-geopolitics. Some Russians ask why the West and the US in particular should inject itself in an area that Russia always regarded as its traditional sphere of influence. The West should not take this argument very seriously in today's world, but it is being made and the Russian government must deal with it. Evidence that other states -- like Germany or Turkey -- are unilaterally advancing their ties with Croatia or Albania, moreover, strengthen the proponents of this argument.

Slav Brotherhood. Romantic nationalists are replacing the slogan "workers, unite" with "Slavs, unite." Thus, ultranationalists see Russia as duty bound to come to the aid of Serbs. For some of the same reasons cited above, we should not take this too seriously, but it cannot be dismissed if other players aid their racial or religious brothers.

Red-Brown Pressures. This dangerous communist-nationalist grouping accepts and propagandizes the above mentioned arguments and uses them to condemn the government for being subservient to the West at the expense of "true" Russian interests. The main aim of this grouping is really to bring down Kozyrev (and Yel'tsin), and its leaders have gleefully seized on the Yugoslav issue as a good one for furthering their domestic political aims.

Harder to Hang Tough

Despite its different perspective on the crisis and domestic political pressures to disassociate itself from the West, the

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Russian government so far has been able to maintain a common front with us. Increasingly, however, it sees the dynamic of events making it harder, if not impossible, to maintain this posture. Moscow fears:

- Actions by the new Administration to live up its pre-election statements urging consideration of military power against the Serbs.
- Sudden diplomatic or military action, like the December US demarche to the Serbs and recent US attacks against Iraq, which caught Russia and others by surprise.
- A spiral of violence precipitated by an upsurge of fighting in Croatia and new Western intervention will further feed the conflict.

If these forebodings come true, the Russian government knows it will come under increasing pressure to modify or change its Western policy, even if it has made clear its disagreement with any Western military actions against Serbia. We may face not just a Russia unwilling to collaborate with the UN, but one driven to consider more overt support for Serbia. This could seriously undermine whatever effect economic sanctions are now having on Belgrade as well as encourage Moscow to turn a blind eye when Serbian arms merchants come looking for spare parts or more sophisticated weapons for a broadening conflict.

Keeping Russia -- and other Perm Four members -- working with us is more likely to further our aims of halting the fighting and managing the crisis. A strategy that tries to enlist Russian influence with the Serbs, along with other Western partners who have influence with Croatia and the Bosnian Muslims, is more likely to be successful than one that simply punishes those who are judged as the guilty. Such a strategy would have to contain both sticks and carrots.

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