

## *After the War on Serbia*

# Gen. Wesley Clark Fights On

At the beginning of the Kosovo conflict, CounterPunch delved into the military career of General Wesley Clark and discovered that his meteoric rise through the ranks derived from the successful manipulation of appearances: faking the results of combat exercises, greasing to superiors and other practices common to the general officer corps. We correctly predicted that the unspinnable realities of a real war would cause him to become unhinged. Given that Clark attempted to bomb the CNN bureau in Belgrade and ordered the British General Michael Jackson to engage Russian troops in combat at the end of the war, we feel events amply vindicated our forecast.

With the end of hostilities it has become clear even to Clark that most people, apart from some fanatical members of the war party in the White House and State Department, consider the general, as one Pentagon official puts it, "a horse's ass". Defense Secretary William Cohen is known to loathe him, and has seen to it that the Hammer of the Serbs will be relieved of the Nato command two months early.

Adding to this humiliation have been numerous post-war reports from the ground in Kosovo making it clear that the air campaign supervised by Clark inflicted little damage on the Serb army. Derisive comments from Serb generals on the general ineffectiveness of Nato's tactical air campaign have only rubbed salt in his wounds. Accordingly, on September 16, in a desperate effort to redeem the tarnished record of his military command, Clark summoned the Nato press corps in Brussels to hear his own version of events.

True to form, Clark's presentation opened with a gross distortion of the truth: "From the outset of this campaign, we said we would be attacking on two air lines of operation. There would be a strategic attack line" against Serb air defenses, headquarters, supply lines and a "tactical line of operation against the Serb forces in Kosovo and in southern Serbia".

In fact, neither Clark nor anyone else

in the U.S. chain of command imagined that the war would involve more than a brief demonstration of Nato firepower in the forms of attacks on air defense radars, communications centers and other fixed targets, thus providing Milosevic with the excuse the U.S. thought he wanted to throw in his hand.

"The Joint Chiefs went along with [the war] on the strict understanding that it would last a maximum of two days", says one Pentagon official with direct knowledge of these events. "No one really planned for what to do after that."

## ***One of Gen. Clark's claimed kills proved to be not a Serbian tank, but a defunct US military piece dating from World War II.***

Clark intended the briefing to provide unassailable confirmation of his wartime claims that Nato pilots had destroyed hundreds of Serb tanks and other heavy weapons. Yet he had a problem, since the teams he dispatched to Kosovo immediately after the war could only find 26 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces destroyed on the ground. Accordingly, Clark tried to dazzle his audience with military managerial techno-speak about the "building block methodology" employed in preparing his assessment, which permitted NATO's supreme commander to add another 67 "successful strikes" to the "catastrophic kills" represented by the 26 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces he had already claimed.

With the sleight of hand of a true briefer, Clark left the impression in the minds of the press corps that in each of these 67 strikes the targets had actually been destroyed. But the "methodology" meant merely that the target was added to the score so long as two or more sources—i.e. the pilot's claim, plus perhaps video footage or a report from someone else in the area—indicated that the weapon had hit the target. With such casuistry, Clark was able to inflate the total figure to 93—not far from the war-

time boast of 110 such kills.

Even the paltry claim of 26 destroyed targets in this category should be viewed with skepticism. An alert friend of CounterPunch in the defense community points out that slide # 27 in the briefing features a "tank" destroyed by a U.S. Navy F-14 mission. Actually, slide #27 shows not a tank but a second world war U.S. tank destroyer known as the M-36, famously ineffective even when introduced in 1943, and later donated to Yugoslavia some time in the 1950s. Perhaps, our friend suggests, "The Yugs

took one look at what they got, and then put the things in front of the nearest VFW-equivalent meeting halls. Then, along come [the Nato attacks] and the word goes out: 'we need hulks to serve as decoys for the Americans to blow up.' Wes Clark & staff collect the imagery and proudly display their 'kill'".

This same observer notes that the Pentagon is working on what will be a "lying, cheating, thieving" after-action report, basing his description on news that the work is being supervised by deputy defense secretary John Hamre, a noted time-server and catspaw of the uniformed military.

Among the many issues the report is not expected to address is the sudden disappearance, half way through the conflict, of the \$2 billion B-2 stealth bomber, described by Clark as one of the "heroes" of the war. Forty-three days into the conflict, the B-2 was reported as having flown "nearly fifty" sorties. When the war ended after 78 days of bombing, an authoritative report stated that the B-2 had flown a total of 49 missions, indicating that it "fell out of the war" half way through. Presumably, the costly behemoths were deteriorating at such a rate that the Air Force decided to relegate the plane to its alternative mis-

sion as backdrop for President Clinton's demonstrations of martial resolve on TV.

Another topic on which we may expect Hamre to remain diplomatically silent is the ingenuity with which the Serbs diverted the anti-radar Harm missiles launched in enormous numbers by Nato's planes. Early on, the Serbs discovered that a microwave oven, adjusted to operate with the door open, appears exactly like an air defense radar to the \$750,000 missiles — a very cost-effective exchange.

Despite such embarrassments, Clark can take heart from the fact that his influence on warfare already transcends the Balkans. Since Operation Allied Force laid waste to the Serbian civilian infrastructure, the targeting of such infrastructure has become routine and acceptable. The Israelis, who have for years shown relative care in avoiding the Lebanese infrastructure in their raids, were quick to change tactics, citing the Balkan operation as a legitimizing precedent. More recently the gangsters in the Kremlin have used the same justification for their terror-bombing of Chechnya.

Since Clark may be chagrined at his reception in post-war Washington, he should perhaps look to Tel Aviv and Moscow for a more fulsome recognition of his role in history. CP

#### (Food Central continued from page 1)

Continental executives say they felt they had no alternative but to surrender to Cargill. They blame the rise of biotech alliances, such as Monsanto and Cargill and ADM and Novartis (the Swiss conglomerate that includes Sandoz and Ciba-Geigy). Paul Fribourg, CEO of Continental Grain says, "We couldn't stay competitive as a grain trader because our competitors were cashing in on the more profitable businesses of milling and crop biotechnology".

Grain is not the only product where concentration is extreme. In the Midwest three of every four sheep are slaughtered by ConAgra; Superior Packing; High Country; and Denver Lamb. Four of every five beef cattle are slaughtered by IBP; ConAgra; Cargill; and Farmland Beef. Three of every five hogs are slaughtered by Murphy Family Farms; Carroll's Foods; Continental Grain; and Smithland Foods. Six firms process half

## Did Bribe Prompt Boris Doublecross?

Given the well attested military ineffectiveness of the Nato bombing campaign, the mystery remains: why did Slobodan Milosevic suddenly throw in his hand and cede control of Kosovo to Nato? The single most important factor determining the Serb cave-in was the betrayal by the Russians, who switched from supporting Sloba to pressuring him to give up.

Now, it is entirely possible that this turnabout was dictated by a legitimate desire to secure a further tranche of IMF cash for the Russian exchequer. However, given the swamp of corruption on which Yeltsin's rule subsists (belatedly "revealed" in the U.S. media in recent months) it is worth considering the possibility that Russian policy was turned on its head on the basis of the simple, old-fashioned expedient of a straight personal cash bribe to Boris himself.

Yeltsin can be bought. CounterPunch's confidence on this point stems from our knowledge of an episode at the United Nations just over five years ago.

In May, 1994, civil war broke out in Yemen. Southerners, who had led their own independent state in South Yemen from 1967 before merging with the north in 1990, were fighting to secede, an effort in which they were wholeheartedly supported and financed by Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have long cherished the aim of destabilizing Yemen and lose no chance to do so whenever opportunity

presents itself.

By the end of May 1994, despite hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and mercenaries supplied by the Saudis to the South, the Yemeni northerners had the southerners on the run. Desperate, the Saudis pushed for a UN Security Council resolution mandating a ceasefire, which by freezing the combatants' positions in place, would have legitimized the southern entity.

According to well informed sources in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, moved to New York and began writing checks. French intelligence later obtained a list of the recipients of Bandar's disbursements, together with the amounts. Top of the list, these Yemenis say, was Boris Yeltsin, the fortunate recipient of \$60 million from Prince Bandar. On June 1, over the bitter objections of the government of Yemen, the resolution was passed by the Security Council, with Russia (which might have entertained doubts regarding support of secessionists in view of its troubles with Chechnya) voting in favor.

Since the Sana'a government ignored the UN injunction and pressed on to victory, Bandar's efforts were all for naught. But Boris Yeltsin, and others cognizant of the deal, may have marked the transaction as an instructive precedent. If Yemen was worth \$60 million, what price the Balkans? CP

of the nation's chickens: Tyson Foods; Gold Kist; Perdue Farms; Pilgrim's Pride; ConAgra Poultry; and Continental Grain. 95 percent of American broiler chickens are sold under contracts to less than 40 firms. Nationally, 76 percent of the grain (corn, wheat and soybeans) is sold to four companies: Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Continental Grain and Bunge.

"One often hears the statement that agriculture is changing and we must adapt to the changes", says William Heffernan, a professor of rural sociology at the University of Missouri. "Few persons who repeat the statement really understand the magnitude of the changes and the implications of them for agriculture and for the long-term sustainability of the food system. It is almost heresy to ask if these changes are what the people of our country really want or, if they are not what is desired, how we might redirect the change. These changes are the result of notoriously

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short-sighted market forces and not the result of public dialogue, the foundation of a democracy. Neither are the changes the result of some mystical figure or an 'invisible hand'."

Earlier this year the Farmers' Union hired Heffernan to undertake a study on consolidation in agricultural trade. Heffernan concluded that once you disentangle a web of subsidiaries, mergers, joint ventures, partnerships, side agreements, marketing arrangements and alliances you find that "three food chains dominate the global food production system". These chains are: Cargill/Monsanto; ConAgra and Novartis/ADM. Even so, Heffernan notes that because of lax reporting requirements it's difficult to get a fix on precisely what these companies own and how they go about doing business. "Cargill has operations in 70 countries and it's a privately held firm. How do we get all of the necessary information? We've exposed the tip of the iceberg, but exposure only indicates the type of information needed to understand the global food system."

Heffernan points to the Cargill/Monsanto cluster as one of the most dangerous of the new alliances. In 1998 Monsanto and Cargill announced that Cargill had sold its vast seed operation to Monsanto (the world's leading biotech outfit) and entered into an agreement with the chemical company to develop new kinds of crop biotechnology. This alliance presents distinct benefits to both companies but dangers to consumers,

farmers and the environment. A case in point is the alliances' so-called terminator gene. "No longer will Monsanto have to depend on access to farmers' fields for collection of tissue samples to make sure farmers do not keep seed from one year's crop to plant the following year", Heffernan warns. "Use of the terminator gene will mean that all crop farmers must return each year to obtain their seed from seed firms, just as corn producers have had

## **Three corporate food chains dominate the global food production system.**

to do for the past half-century."

If the press, which rarely mentions agricultural issues anymore, doesn't take this turn of events seriously, the corporate leaders of the agri-conglomerates certainly do. And they are not the least bit bashful about what's at stake. Dwayne Andreas is the politically wired former CEO of Archer Daniels Midland. He recently boasted to Reuters that he wanted to make ADM the world's dominant agriculture firm because, to his way of thinking, there's simply nothing more powerful than controlling the world's food supply. He said agribusiness is more powerful than the oil industry.

"The food business is far and away the most important business in the

world," Andreas said. "Everything else is a luxury. Food is what you need to sustain life every day. Food is fuel. You can't run a tractor without fuel and you can't run a human being without it either. Food is the absolute beginning."

In response to the new corporate combines, the farmer cooperatives themselves are merging, creating an ever-narrowing vortex of concentration. On May 12 of this year, two of the nation's biggest farmer coops, Farmland Industries and Cenex Harvest States Cooperatives, announced their intention to marry. The new entity will be known as United Country Brands and will probably do more than \$6.7 billion in revenues every year. United Country Brands will rank as the United States' third biggest grain company, behind only Cargill and Archer Daniels Midlands.

The CEO of Cenex said the union with Farmland was dictated by the growing might of Cargill. "Moving grain is expensive", Estenson told the Wall Street Journal. "We need to spread these costs over more bushels."

But the merging of the farmer coops spells doom for the small farmer in the end, as stranglehold economic policies take their toll. One estimate has the number of family farms falling from 300,000 to less than 25,000 by the year 2025. There's a real crisis brewing and no one is paying much heed. "Increasingly, our agriculturally based communities are looking like the mining communities of the old West," Heffernan concludes sadly. CP

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