

International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts
ISODARCO

“The Balkans and Greater Europe: Military Security and Stability”
13-14 December 1999, Venice, Italy

REPORT

The first Isodarco Seminar on the Balkans and Greater Europe has been held at the Domus Ciliota in Venice on December 13 and 14. It has been attended by 24 participants: Italy 9, Russia 2, UK 2, USA 3, Yugoslavia 2 and one each from Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Kosova and Romania.

The expertise of the participants extended from the military dimension (Gen. Luigi Caligaris and Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden) to the diplomatic (Amb. Peter Galbraith) the political (Ioan Mircea Pascu, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Parliament of Romania) and included several people from the political sciences (Acc. Georgi Arbatov, Vladimir Baranovski, Alessandro Silj,) or from NGO active in the territory of the former Yugoslavia (Annemarie Duprè). Prof. George Rathjens, from MIT, Secretary General of the Pugwash Conferences was also present.

The main purpose of the seminar was to assess the present situation in the region directly affected by the recent military operations and to understand its implications for the future stability of the region and the security of Greater Europe.

Particularly interesting were the eyewitness accounts of the situation in Kosova and Serbia and the problems facing the international relief organisations that are trying to work in the local situation when there is no state structure working.

The refugee problem was discussed from many points of view: the problem of the urgent humanitarian intervention, that of repatriation and the immediate and long term impact on the stability of the region.

Particularly interesting was the discussion of the impact of the NATO military intervention on the internal situations in Serbia and Russia and its relation with the Nato powers and the USA in particular.

In the concluding session the President of Isodarco, convenor of the seminar, asked the question if it was considered sensible and useful that a small organisation like Isodarco should try to get more involved in the problems of the region considering the large number of international organisations and NGO already operating there. The response was that the problem of reconstructing a peaceful and tolerant environment in the region could not be solved in any reasonably short time. It required a long and slow process of healing and understanding in which the peoples of the region, and in particular the younger generations, should read again their national and ethnic histories now distorted by the fog of war and criminal demagogues. Isodarco, with its long tradition of teaching difficult subjects, could bring together scholars and young people of the region in a congenial atmosphere conducive to objective analysis.

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