

# Serbia goes into breakaway mode

by Konstantin George

The “new” verbal tilt in U.S. policy condemning Serbia as the aggressor in the war against Bosnia, and threatening Serbia with possible future sanctions and international isolation, will not open the path for peace in Bosnia. The U.S. moves have actually forced the escalation of the Serbian war. The U.S. policy is a two-faced one, since the loud verbal threats have no “teeth” and no fixed, let alone early, deadline for compliance before sanctions and other measures take effect.

The effect of this has been pernicious on all sides. The image of a United States condemning Serbian aggression has nurtured false hopes in Europe that early, joint American-European sanctions are possible, causing European governments, led by Germany, to postpone unilateral or European initiatives, while trying to forge a “consensus” response with Washington. This buys time for Belgrade, time the Serbians expect to run out sometime in May. Until then, Serbia is stepping up its war in Bosnia.

The same tragedy caused by the disgusting farce of European governments playing the “consensus” game last year that let Croatia bleed, and one-third of it be occupied by Serbian forces, when Germany waited for a European Community “consensus” on Croatia, is being replayed regarding Bosnia. The latest statement issued by the German government on April 22, in response to a call by the Christian Union parties’ faction in the Parliament for sanctions on Serbia, was that Bonn would only impose sanctions in conjunction with a European Community decision.

At the level of EC leadership, in the present phase of rotation in the hands of Portugal (a British surrogate), the farce of “consensus,” while hundreds die in Bosnia, is being played in the form of trying to forge a “consensus” with the Bush administration, in talks held at the White House April 22.

Before these talks, EC declarations were already woefully inadequate: Witness the demand for Serbia to cease its aggression or face sanctions by “April 29 at the latest,” issued April 20 by Portuguese Foreign Minister Pinheiro, head of the EC Ministerial Commission. Even this declaration, had it become policy, would still have given Serbia nine more days to continue military operations. But it was withdrawn after the April 22 meeting among President Bush, EC Council Chairman Cavaco Silva, and EC Commission President Jacques Delors. The “Yugoslavia” agenda portion of the meeting produced a U.S.-EC resolution calling for a “strate-



gy of political pressure and isolation” against Serbia, leaving out any concrete measures and, all-important, any deadline.

The earliest possible juncture for imposition of sanctions will be the EC foreign ministers meeting, set for May 1-2 in Portugal.

## Bosnia nearly encircled

Since mid-April, following the Serbian conquest of much of northeastern and eastern Bosnia, Serbian military operations became concentrated in northern and northwestern Bosnia, to the south in Hercegovina, and in occupying half of the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. The aim here is to turn this part into the capital of the Serbian-controlled part of Bosnia. The Serbian military is gambling that, by going for broke now, it can complete a string of conquests. Combined with the areas of Croatia seized last year—areas which add up to most of the Croatian territory bordering Bosnia—these gains would give Serbia a blockade of landlocked Bosnia, making it economically untenable.

By April 22, the Serbian offensives had gone far toward completing the blockade of Bosnia. In eastern Bosnia, a north-south corridor has been seized, running through the captured towns of Zvornik, Vlasenica, Visegrad, and Foca. Simultaneously, an east-west corridor running through northern Bosnia has been taken through the capture of the towns, Derventa, Modrica, Bosanski Samac, and Brcko, thus linking the Serbian conquests in northeast Bosnia to the Serbian-controlled regions in northwest and western Bosnia.

The calls for Serbia to stop the war are correct, but simply stopping military operations will not end the agony in Bosnia. As long as the blockade capability remains in place, Bosnia will be a state in name only, and the next armed conflict on its territory will be inevitable.