

New round of killing looms in Bosnia

by Katharine Kanter

Although the gaze of the world is presently averted from Bosnia, the potential for a major conflict to erupt once again, before the winter, increases by the day; such a conflict, one of the few games in which Great Britain still holds most of the cards in hand, would serve to reverse the policy trend enunciated by President Clinton in his Berlin speech on July 11, a policy orientated toward the economic development of central and eastern Europe and centered upon Germany.

When, on July 19, the Parliament of the self-styled "Serbian Republic of Bosnia" at Pale, made it known that it rejected the Contact Group's peace plan, which was intended to be signed on that date and which was to consecrate the bi-partition of Bosnia, the government of Yugoslavia (Serbia) put on an "offended dowager" act transparent to anyone but the utterly credulous: President Slobodan Milosevic claimed that he had been betrayed by the Bosnian Serbs, that he was a fervent partisan of the so-called peace plan—itsself a grotesque farce—and that if the Karadzic regime did not knuckle under, economic and other sanctions by Yugoslavia against the "Serbian Republic of Bosnia" would be put into effect.

By the end of the first week of August, Milosevic claimed that the border between Yugoslavia and Bosnia was sealed, and that nothing save "humanitarian" supplies was going across to refurnish the Serbian troops on the other side. Since the Serbian forces in Bosnia are believed to have a six-month stockpile of fuel and weapons, even were the borders to be closed, a winter campaign could still be waged effectively. In any event, Milosevic made it clear, yet again on Aug. 22 to U.N. envoy Akashi, that no international observers will be allowed to inspect the condition of the "sealed" borders unless the trade embargo upon rump Yugoslavia be raised.

According to Bosnian sources, the border is *not* sealed, men and matériel continue to pour over from Serbia. Unfortunately, the NATO satellite photographs proving this, with a level of detail that on-the-ground eyewitness reports or photography cannot provide, are neither in the public domain, nor are they accessible to the Bosnian Armed Forces. What this means, however, is that every other military power active in the region is perfectly aware of the Milosevic-

Karadzic game and is playing along with it for the purpose of keeping the appearance of unity among the Contact Group, which is England, France, Russia, and the United States.

Demands from Belgrade

Thanks to the complicity of all western powers in the Serbian game, the government of Yugoslavia is now in a position to stridently demand that the trade embargo against Yugoslavia be lifted. In the second week of August, high officials of the government, including President Lilic of rump Yugoslavia, travelled to Tunisia and Libya, where they were royally received, and to the new regime of Leonid Kuchma in Ukraine; according to official Yugoslavian press reports, there on the agenda was, quite openly, how to get around the embargo, and how to develop close economic cooperation in the immediate, short-term perspective of the embargo being lifted.

There are also rumors that the Contact Group is about to allow the Belgrade regime to reopen the capital's airport, and a new gold dinar has been put into circulation upon the order of Central Bank governor Abramovic. Yugoslavia is now probably the only country in the world with monetary gold, gold currency, 500,000 pieces of which are expected to be circulating by October. In Asia, gold is the main form of payment for contraband—in particular, narcotic substances. As such a move, under a war economy, would normally unleash a wave of hoarding for gold coin, the shrewd Abramovic is doubtless assured of another source of resupply for Yugoslavia's depleted gold reserves, namely the world's largest gold producer, Russia.

Indeed, given the faltering and lack of clarity from the Clinton administration with respect to the Balkans, Russia has reverted to a policy of open support for Belgrade; on Aug. 11, the government of Russia demanded that the trade embargo against Belgrade be lifted. In that week, Defense Minister Pavel Grachov travelled to Belgrade, and met there, not only with Milosevic and Karadzic, but with the chiefs of staff of both the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian insurgency in Bosnia, as well as key political and military figures from both Serbian-occupied Bosnia and Yugoslavia. The London Contact Group is words, and as the Russians know better than anyone, what counts in a winter offensive is action.

The military situation

The Serbs will need all the help they can get, because in spite of crushing superiority in terms of matériel, the reorganized Bosnian Army under General Delic is re-taking Serbian-occupied territory step by step. The so-called Posavina Corridor, a 2-kilometer strip of Serbian-occupied territory linking Serbian "possessions" in eastern and western Bosnia, has been cut back to less than 500 meters in several places; the only reason it has not been entirely cut through, is apparently that the government of Bosnia fears that the Serbians

will retaliate by heavy shelling of Tuzla or other densely populated areas.

In the second week of August, a significant advance was made by the Bosnian Armed Forces, when they finally succeeded in crushing the uprising by Fikret Abdic, a turncoat who had declared, in May 1993, a secessionist "Bosnian Republic of Bihać," and who had joined with the Serbian forces. Thousands of his supporters are now fleeing over the Croatian border, into Serbian-occupied territory of the Krajina. The heights around Tuzla are reported to have been retaken from the Serbs, and Bosnian gains are reported from the Vlasica area, near Zenica, and around Brčko, in spite of the fact that nothing beyond shoulder-held weapons, no heavy artillery, no mortars, no heavy matériel, is reaching the Bosnian Army in significant quantity.

U.S. policy inadequate

Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress and Senate do not appear to be operating on a mental timetable which would enable Bosnia to win the war, before a third icy winter sweeps into the grave hundreds of thousands of hapless men and women. To speak of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia by Oct. 15, or Nov. 15, or Thanksgiving Day, or whatever, is out of all reality, when 70% of Bosnia's territory is in the hands of the Serbians. For that reason, it has not, in most cases, been possible to sow any crops save kitchen gardens, and there has been very little harvest. Around all the cities, the trees have been cut down over the last two winters for firewood; there are no trees left to cut, no fuel, and no other means of heating. The Unprofor (U.N. "peacekeeping" force), which can cut off all convoy routes at the flick of a switch, since it controls all the nodal points of access to Bosnia by road, is a declared hostile force, composed almost entirely of British and French troops whose command is pro-Serbian, which means that food and medical supplies this winter will reach central Bosnia only at the grace and favor of Unprofor.

On Aug. 18, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher gave an interview to the London *Financial Times* on U.S. foreign policy, where he mentioned, in an aside, that Bosnia is "important, but not of vital interest to the U.S.A." Smooth and clever as he is, Mr. Christopher, who said in the same interview that we have to get away from "great principles" and back to the concept of "case law" in such matters, clearly knows a great deal less about the real stuff of international politics than does Pope John Paul II. On Sept. 8, the pope, accompanied by the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Elio Toaff, will visit Sarajevo, in spite of open threats on his life from Karadzic and from Metropolitan Jovan of the Orthodox Church of Slovenia and Croatia, and in spite of a torrent of abuse in the British and other press about a purported "Vatican-Muslim" alliance on this and other strategic issues such as the Cairo depopulation conference. John Paul II plans to celebrate Mass in Sarajevo stadium.

Russia accelerates neo-imperial drive

by Konstantin George

The neo-imperial direction in Russian policy has become more pronounced than ever, as a multitude of statements by Russian leaders during August attest. This has been timed with a view to distracting attention from the domestic socio-economic crisis. It has been tailored to a widespread belief among Russians and segments of the population in the non-Russian republics that their misfortunes are due, not to Moscow's shock therapy policies, but to the breakup of the U.S.S.R., and that a remedy can be found by creating a new Russian empire in the former Soviet Union.

Economic explosions are close at hand. The trigger for this is the inter-enterprise debt, which has risen astronomically alongside a collapse in production down to levels of the early 1970s. On Aug. 17, Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovyets, chairman of an emergency commission hastily put together by the regime this summer to deal with the debt, stated in a televised address that the total of inter-enterprise debt had reached 90,000 billion rubles. He warned that the industrial enterprises of Russia are on the brink of a chain reaction of bankruptcies, leading to closures and mass unemployment.

Soskovyets's policy shifts illustrate the quandary confronting the Russian government. On Aug. 17, he sounded like an official of the International Monetary Fund in his statements concerning debt-ridden enterprises: "The state must be very harsh with those companies that behave themselves badly in the transition to a market economy. . . . We cannot simply give them soft loans." He admitted that what he called a "further contradiction" in industrial production, is "inevitable." He also denounced the idea of state intervention to protect Russian producers from cheap foreign imports, endorsing the British doctrine of free trade: "We must not be confused by some pseudo-patriotic idea about defending our markets. The state cannot stem the inflow of foreign goods."

By Aug. 22, Soskovyets was denouncing radical free marketeers and attacking "those politicized economists who believe that the formation of a market should occur in circumstances of total chaos." He hinted that the government was considering wage and price controls, beginning with price ceilings on monopoly energy suppliers and transportation companies. On the same day, the Central Bank, trying to buy a little time, cut its three-month refinancing interest rate from 150% to 130%—the seventh cut this year and the second during August. However, it precipitated a new collapse of