

Tide begins to turn against Serbian war of aggression

by Katharine Kanter

Over the last week in late October-early November, the Bosnian Army has begun to turn the tide against the Serbian war of aggression in the Balkans. A three-pronged drive has been launched from Bihac toward Bosanska Krupa on the east bank of the Una River and toward Bosanski Petrovac; from Tomislavgrad and the area south of Bugojna toward Kupres, which fell to the Bosnian Army on Nov. 3; and from outside Trnovo, gate to the eastern enclaves, toward occupied eastern Bosnia. Near Bihac, where the Grmusko-Srbljanski Plateau was taken on Oct. 26, the Bosnian Army seized a quantity of tanks and armored vehicles, of which, because of the U.N. arms embargo, it had previously almost nothing. The Serbian front line, which stretches over 2,000 kilometers, is now etiolated and distinctly ragged.

The Serbians have responded to the offensive in northwest Bosnia by shelling, from bases located inside the Unprofor (U.N. peacekeeping forces) zone in occupied Croatia, the towns of Cazin, Buzim, and Velika Kladusa, and the suburbs of Bihac. Typically, these heroes have also threatened to turn heavy artillery on the major cities of Bosnia, while Unprofor head, British Gen. Sir Michael Rose, spoke of launching NATO air raids against the Bosnian Army positions. Using terms identical to those of Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Karasin (who said "it would be catastrophic if nothing were done to stop the Bosnian offensive"), Rose stated:

"The strategic balance is slowly turning against the Bosnian Serb army. . . . If the Bosnian government . . . [returns] to a full-scale war . . . it would be a catastrophe for the people of this country." One presumes he means England.

'We have relied upon our own forces'

Of the victories of the past week, during which over 250 square kilometers were liberated, Bosnian commander Delic said in a public statement: "At the beginning of the year, the Bosnian Army managed to create the essential preconditions for moving from the defensive, to the liberation phase of the war. Therefore, operations which are offensive by the way they are being carried out, but defensive by their character, because of being carried out on Bosnian territory, have been undertaken. The Bosnian Army has gained control over more key communications directions and dominant peaks, and framed a solid territorial base by which defense of the free

areas may be strengthened and those areas further expanded. The total liberated territory is now 1,300 square kilometers. The arms embargo, which damages only the Bosnian Army, has led to an artificial imbalance, especially in heavy artillery. . . . It has been shown that relying upon our own forces is the path to succeed. Gratitude must be shown to the Bosnian Army soldiers for their devotion, courage, and patriotism which they expressed on every occasion."

Croatia reappears on the battlefield

Of great significance in the battle for Kupres, is the presence of the HVO, the Croatian Army. U.N. observers confirm troop movements heading east from Tomislavgrad to meet up with the Bosnian Army attacking southwest from Bugojno, and have seen Croatian rocket-launchers and tanks in the area. According to U.N. spokesman Paul Risley in the Croatian capital of Zagreb, the HVO has also joined the Bosnian Army south of Bihac, taking up Serbian positions on the west bank of the Una River, and had begun to engage Serbian forces inside the Serbian-occupied Krajina region of Croatia, where they have been reports over the last six weeks of very heavy fighting between cross-border Bosnian detachments and the Serbian forces.

These events, the first good news in months, will not only blow up the London Contact Group's attempts to back Croatian President Franjo Tudjman into agreeing to deal with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, including granting Serbia access to the sea, but will put him under great pressure to start a full-scale military offensive in the Krajina and in eastern Slavonia. Most important, the past week's victories, which the U.S. State Department described as a "necessity . . . the Bosnian government has understandably decided to exercise its right to defend itself by force of arms," have, by fundamentally altering the military line-up on the terrain, *torn up the agreements with the London Contact Group*, and, de facto, rendered it otiose and its deliberations null and void. *The partition of Bosnia is off the agenda.*

There can be little doubt that the Clinton administration is no stranger to the recent positive turn of events. As we mentioned in last week's *EIR*, it was announced on Oct. 19 that the United States was sending Gen. John Galvin and 15 U.S. officers to "render effective" the Croatian-Bosnian military alliance on the terrain, and, around that date, Grego-

ry Treverton, deputy chairman of estimates of the National Intelligence Council, was in Bosnia, one assumes for purposes unrelated to tourism. There now exists the almost unparalleled situation whereby the officers and enlisted men of three different countries—the United States, England, and France, all of which are technically allies within a single military pact known as NATO—are *de facto fighting on opposite sides in a major war* being waged on the territory of two other countries. In other words, the Clinton administration is showing by its deeds what it has not yet put into words: It no longer considers England to be a friendly nation.

As for a certain French faction, known to wags by a code name drawn from a medieval eulogy of pederasty, "*L'important c'est la Rose*" (The Rose, 'tis the Matter), they are busy as little bees drawing up, for the Franco-British summit on Nov. 18, far-reaching military cooperation agreements with England, all the while spitting like llamas at President Bill Clinton. Babbling away to the Paris daily *Libération's* correspondent in Sarajevo, a French officer accused the Clinton administration of "deliberately sabotaging the painstaking work of Unprofor," which has been, indeed, painstakingly occupying itself in recent weeks with firing upon Bosnian troops on Mt. Igman in order to cut the Bosnians last land route into besieged Sarajevo.

Another high-ranking French officer told the paper, "Ask yourself whose planes fly over Bosnia when AWACS is in charge of monitoring, and check out the increased level of activity on U.S. bases in Germany." Some 30 km northwest of Sarajevo, at Visoko, the airport has apparently been rebuilt—so the French intimate, thanks to the Americans—in order to receive heavy cargo planes for logistical support to the war effort beyond anything that has been feasible to date. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic was so furious following his discussion in Sarajevo at the end of October with French Defense Minister François Léotard, who threatened his host with a cut-off of food aid, under the guise of withdrawing Unprofor, if the arms embargo were lifted, that he refused to take part in Léotard's press conference scheduled to take place after their discussion.

Downfall of the 'high-class Chetnik'

So, the little crowd of British enthusiasts at the court of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic at Pale—the redoubtable Miss Beloff, Sir Alfred Sherman, and our scholar, John Zametica—had a nasty week. Their cheerleader, Gen. Sir Michael Rose, known to the Bosnians as "that high-class Chetnik," has a penchant for letter-writing. Many of us do, and so many of us have written silly things we later regret. But only the Happy Few maintain a cordial private correspondence with Gen. Ratko Mladic, commander of the Serbian forces in Bosnia. Yes, these two luvvies write to each other in the most unguarded way! Concerned about anarchistic behavior by Serbian militiamen who, by foolishly engaging fire with Unprofor troops, were giving the Americans an



Alija Izetbegovic, President of Bosnia and Herzegovina. His Army says it is beginning to move from the defensive, to the liberation phase of the war.

excuse to call in air raids against the Serbians, "*L'important, c'est la Rose*" rote, pardon me, wrote, the following, on Sept. 30:

"I would like to confirm that the U.N. always regrets the need to use force in its peacekeeping mission. As commander I fully agree with you that we must, in the future, avoid all situations which necessitate the use of force, whether it be applied from the ground or the air. *We can only do this through closer liaison and cooperation. . . . These are difficult times for everyone*, and we must not allow local tactical-level incidents to undermine the road to peace."

That letter was sent, by some mysterious hand, to the diplomatic correspondent of the London *Times*, Eve-Ann Prentice, who was expelled last June from the U.N. press pool at the Geneva negotiations, at the request of Lord David Owen's spokesman, who had gone ballistic when Prentice published similarly unguarded statements made to her by that spokesman, not in confidence, but on the record.

Those who keep their ear to the ground report that General Rose has devoted a considerable part of his extremely valuable time to the matter of that letter, which, as Miss Prentice coyly remarked to the *Times*, "is likely to cause outrage in Washington, widen the rift between NATO and the U.N., and renew calls by the Bosnian government for General Rose to resign."

Grim may be the humor in war, but it can be pretty damn funny nonetheless.