

Bosnian accord: heartbreaks, but also opportunities

by Michael Liebig

At the Nov. 21 initialing ceremony for the agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina which was hammered out in Dayton, Ohio, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic commented that "it is probably not a just peace, but it is more just than a continuation of the war"—an apt characterization of this agreement, when one considers the fact that since the beginning of the warfare in 1992, approximately 250,000 residents of Bosnia-Herzegovina have been killed, and that there are now about 2 million expellees and refugees.

Despite these hideous losses, no one has succeeded in breaking the spirit of the people and the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina—Muslims, Croats, and members of the loyalist Serb minority. This is all the more important, given that on the international level, Bosnia-Herzegovina has had to contend with a largely hostile environment—a situation which has been rubbed in, time and time again by the criminal behavior of the United Nations. Bosnia's "friends," meanwhile, have remained passive for the most part, and their assistance has come too late, and has been spotty and half-hearted. And so, it is bitter indeed to see how the chief instigator of the Serbian war of aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slobodan Milosevic, is now being presented as a "man of peace," a man ostensibly so utterly different from his subalterns, the war criminals Karadzic and Mladic. With international recognition, for all intents and purposes, Milosevic now controls about half of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina—a big chunk of war booty for the Serbians.

Dayton in the global policy context

Over the past three years, Milosevic has always been able to count on open or covert support from London. Up to the end of 1992, he could also count upon the Bush administration in Washington, and also, up to the spring of 1995, on the Mitterrand government in Paris. Moscow's support for

Belgrade should also not be underestimated; it was, and remains, a fact. From the very outset, British policy in the Balkans has aimed at maintaining and solidifying Serbia as the hegemonic power in the Balkans, as a geopolitical counterweight, in Europe's southeast, to a reunified Germany. In pursuit of that policy, Britain has not only acquiesced in, but has also actively promoted cynical aggression and genocide against the other peoples of the region. After Germany turned out to be a wimp, and was taken into the British fold for the time being, the focus of British Balkan policy shifted somewhat: The aim now was to prevent the United States under President Bill Clinton from emerging as the dominant power factor in the Balkans. At the same time, the British tried to cozy up to Moscow.

Whatever one might say about the specifics of the Dayton agreement, it remains a fact that it represents a failure for this London policy. It is, admittedly, true, that with this agreement, along with the military developments that preceded it in the summer and autumn of 1995, Serbia's aggression has been rolled back only to a limited extent. But despite this, Serbia's role as *the* hegemonic power in the Balkans is now a dead letter. Already at this point, Serbia's power is eclipsed by the combined military, demographic, and economic weight of Croatia together with the Muslim-Croatian Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, one can assume that the U.S. military presence will not remain limited to the time-restricted presence of the "Implementation Force" (I-Force). It is quite likely that the United States will now move toward establishing permanent military bases on Croatian and Bosnian soil.

Two weeks before the initialing of the Dayton agreement, Lyndon LaRouche described the direction, but also the ambivalence in the U.S. government's policy toward Bosnia: "One should not look for simple, clear-cut Bosnian

policy and Bosnian solutions. You have the President trying *not* to do anything bad, and accomplish something good, while balancing these considerations against his problems at home, his problems within his partnership in France, and his problems in dealing with the Russians." Clinton is being forced to do a "tightrope act." He also has problems with factions "within his own State Department" regarding Bosnia. Clinton wants to achieve "a certain degree of stability" in the Balkans, since otherwise London will continue to manipulate this hotspot in order to poison U.S. relations with Russia. On Nov. 27 and Nov. 29, Clinton is expected to give two basic foreign policy addresses, in which he will lay out his Bosnia policy more extensively.

A transitional agreement

The specifics of the Dayton agreement, contained in its 150 pages of text, 11 side-agreements, and 102 maps, have not yet been released to the public. It remains unclear, how the sovereignty of a single "unified state" of Bosnia-Herzegovina made up of two separate "parts," is to be implemented. "Free elections" are to be held for a "unified" parliament and a "joint government," which will be responsible for foreign, economic, and financial policy. Human rights, and the "return of refugees," are to be guaranteed. The current military front lines, 2,000 kilometers long, are to become demarcation lines which the U.S.-led international I-Force is to protect.

The extremely involuntarily nature of the front lines, with their many tongues and bays and little connecting corridors (e.g., Posavina, the announced connection between Sarajevo and Gorazde), make it doubtful whether these borders will hold permanently. If one takes a sober look at the Dayton agreement, one has to conclude that it is transitional in nature, and that it is unrealistic to think that this agreement has definitively established the status quo in Bosnia.

President Clinton evidently wants a pause in the bloody warfare at least until early 1997; reelection considerations doubtless play an important role here. Also, in the event that the NATO military alliance is extended further eastward in Europe, Clinton wants to eliminate the Balkans as a dangerous factor of tension in U.S.-Russia relations. Yet for all these intentions, people in Washington are well aware that the state of affairs agreed upon in Dayton cannot be a permanent one.

Sooner or later, the on-the-ground situation in Bosnia will change again. This could occur militarily, just as, after four years of defeat, Croatia conducted its successful military campaign to liberate almost all of its Serbian-occupied territory. But the change could also come about in other, non-military ways. In this regard, the fact that the Dayton agreement establishes Bosnia-Herzegovina's legal right to exist under international law, is of no small importance. All the abovementioned treaty items—sovereignty, elections, unified legislative and executive branches, freedom of movement, freedom to settle where one pleases—have great political significance as claims to legal existence.

One should also keep in mind, that the situation in "rump Yugoslavia" and in the "Serbian-Bosnian Republic" is by no means stable. The ideology of "Greater Serbia" is deeply rooted in the Serbian population. The Serb aggression, and the atrocities committed by the Serbian side since the early 1990s, were, and still are, approved as justifiable acts in the eyes of large numbers of Serbians. There are, however, signs that this historically ingrown ideological aberration can be broken through. With his assent to the Dayton agreement, Serbia's President Milosevic is pursuing a scaled-down variant of his "Greater Serbian" policy, which gives little reassurance that there will be any real change of heart in Serbia. Yet one should not underestimate the political tensions that exist within the Serbian camp. Political stability in the "post-Communist" *nomenklatura* that currently runs Serbia, is by no means assured—all the less so, because of the enormous economic problems now facing Serbia, especially in the areas of technology and infrastructure. The lifting of the economic sanctions (which already had so many holes that they resembled Swiss cheese) will not be the *deus ex machina* for economic recovery. And, more than ever, Serbia must face its unsolved problems of its own brutally repressed non-Serbian minorities in Kosovo, Sandjak, and elsewhere.

The economic factor

The emerging combination of military strength, political stability, and economic progress in Croatia and in the Bosnian-Croatian Federation, could exert a strong influence on the Serbian population. The parliamentary elections held in Croatia in October, stand as proof of the Croatian population's great political maturity: The Croatian voters did not give President Franjo Tudjman his expected two-thirds majority for his party in the Sabor (the Croatian parliament). It is also very important that in the wake of the elections, the so-called "Herzegovina Mafia," which seeks to break up the Bosnian-Croatian Federation, was pushed into a back seat in Croatian political life.

But great danger still looms for Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina on the all-important economic front. On the question of economic reconstruction, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are attempting to arrogate a key role to themselves. As *EIR* has documented in detail, the World Bank has systematically sabotaged any true economic reconstruction in conjunction with the Middle East peace process, and there is no reason to believe it will be any different in this case.

In anticipation of the World Bank-sponsored "Grantors' Conference for Economic Reconstruction in Bosnia-Herzegovina," which is to take place on Dec. 18-19 in Brussels, presiding World Bank Director Dervis stated that there exists a "direct connection" between reconstruction investment and Bosnian "foreign debt." Dervis estimated the financial needs for Bosnia's reconstruction at between \$3.7 and \$4.5 billion; against this, he counterposed Bosnia's "foreign indebtedness" of \$3.5 billion. Almost all of these debts are old obliga-

tions of the former communist Serbian-Yugoslavian leadership. And so, the World Bank and IMF are now demanding that an exhausted Bosnia immediately implement a "normalization of its international financial relations" as a precondition for receiving reconstruction assistance.

Negative factors, but also new options

Typically, on Nov. 22, the British government made similar statements, also demanding that it be given a leading role in deciding Bosnia's fate on economic and financial questions. This same cynical attitude was evident in commentaries appearing in the British media, such as the London *Times*, which often serves as a mouthpiece for the British Foreign Office. These same media, which for three years have been demanding that Bosnia-Herzegovina finally capitulate and accept "military defeat," are now fulminating against "the arrogance of Clinton," who is "selling out" Bosnia's "vital interests," and who wants to turn the country into an "American protectorate."

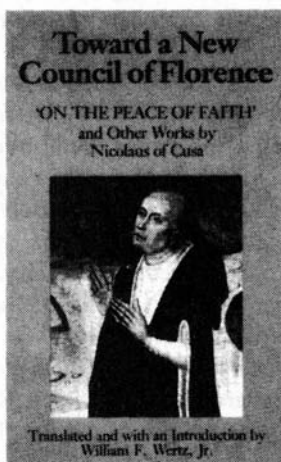
In conclusion, it should be emphasized, once again, that the Dayton agreement is a transitional step—albeit a very important one—in the political, economic, and military development of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and of Serbia as well. There is no denying the negative factors; but at the same time, it opens up new opportunities for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia which must now be followed up aggressively.

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Algeria

Election farce may prove serious

by Anna Varga

The Algerian civil war was ignited when the military government unilaterally suspended elections at the end of 1991, which the opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win. The second round, scheduled for January 1992, never took place. Instead, a bloody confrontation was launched, through the use of terrorists known as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The GIA, which represents the notorious "afghansi" networks created during the Afghanistan War, have been deployed in Algeria by sectors of Algerian military security known as the "eradicators," those who desire the physical elimination of the opposition through such a staged conflict. Over the past four years, the Algerian population has been subjected to atrocities of unprecedented brutality by both sides, and the result has been the death of an estimated 50,000 people, mostly civilians.

In mid-November, the Algerian regime staged elections under Liamine Zeroual, who was appointed President in 1994. The aim of the unusual elections, was to give Zeroual an aura of respectability and legitimacy, particularly in the international arena. French President Jacques Chirac, who had planned to meet Zeroual in New York during the U.N. General Assembly, but cancelled the meeting because it would have constituted political support for the regime, made known that he would have pushed the Algerian strongman to stage Presidential elections, and to follow them up with parliamentary elections. This way, the process of democratic restoration was supposed to be restarted.

The elections, according to the opposition inside Algeria and abroad, were anything but fair and free. First, only three candidates in addition to Zeroual were allowed to run; the entire country was placed under military control as 300-400,000 soldiers were deployed to patrol major cities, and intimidation was practiced, to corral reluctant citizens to vote, particularly in rural areas. The opposition parties had called for abstention, as a sign of protest against elections held under conditions of martial law. According to opposition sources, only 37% of the eligible voters went to the polls, although government reports claimed exactly twice that number. The results, too, betrayed signs of computer manipulation, as the four candidates were attributed almost exactly five times what their parties or corresponding political formations had tolled in 1991. Thus Sheikh Nahnah, whose Hamas party was given 5% in 1991, got 25% this