

Serbian regular forces move to crush Bosnia

by Konstantin George

As the world watches and does nothing, Serbian forces began on Sept. 14 a "final offensive" to crush what is left of the Bosnian state, with the aim of completing this operation before winter. The offensive has the goal of crushing the last strongholds of resistance by Bosnian regular forces, in and around the capital Sarajevo and in areas of Bosnia designated by Belgrade as belonging to a "Greater Serbia." These include the following besieged towns, all under intense air and artillery bombardment: Jajce in central Bosnia; Gorazde in southeast Bosnia; Brcko, Bosanski Brod, and Gradacac in northern Bosnia; Sokolac in northwest Bosnia; and the surrounded Bihac pocket in western Bosnia. The last case, though it never makes the alarming headlines it deserves, houses some 300,000 Bosnians, including refugees, and has become like the Gaza Strip for the homeless Palestinians.

The green light for the Serbian onslaught was given by the U.N. Security Council resolutions of Sept. 11, when it was decided to send a mere 6,000 additional U.N. troops, as aid convoy escorts at best, and with no date specified. The Security Council refused to proclaim an air exclusion zone against the Serbian Air Force over Bosnian airspace. Coupled with the continued international arms embargo against Bosnia and Croatia, this signaled to Belgrade that it could do as it pleased.

Politically, the last missing element in Serbian pre-offensive preparations was a move to break the "solemn promise" of Bosnian Serbian leader Radovan Karadzic that by Sept. 12 all Serbian heavy weapons besieging Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities would be turned over to the United Nations. When Sept. 12 came, Karadzic issued a "qualifier" to his promise, saying that the Serbian forces would not use their heavy weapons "unless attacked." Technically, the Serbian besiegers of Sarajevo were being "attacked" by the Bosnian defenders of the besieged capital. What was behind this "attack"?

Some 380,000 helpless civilians are trapped in Sarajevo, without electricity or running water, and since the shameful halt to the U.N. airlift, food stocks are running low. These people will die of hunger or disease unless the siege is broken. The Bosnian attack so-called, was a "do or die" attempt to break the siege before this holocaust. The Bosnian forces came close several times in the first half of September to

achieving this near miracle, but superior Serbian firepower proved too much for Bosnian infantry, equipped only with light weapons. The Bosnian drive was halted. By Sept. 14, Serbian reinforcements were brought to the front, and the war's most dangerous Serbian offensive against Sarajevo had begun in earnest.

By Sept. 16, the Bosnian defenders of Sarajevo had been pushed back to positions they held when their offensive had started, losing the gains they had made at tremendous cost in lives. Serbian forces, in heavy fighting on Sept. 15, came close to breaking the main Bosnian defense lines around the capital. By Sept. 16 in their advances in the capital's western suburbs had come to within less than half a mile of cutting the main road from the airport to the city's center. Meanwhile, at Jajce, the Bosnian commander on Sept. 15 reported to his superiors in Sarajevo that he could not hold out much longer.

Partisan war

It should be stressed that the policies of the Serbian leadership are not only criminal, but stupid. They may seize every Bosnian "stronghold," but all they will have achieved is the basis for a long and brutal partisan war behind their lines of conquest, in occupied Bosnia. That partisan war has already begun. The myth of "Greater Serbia" will soon be shattered by the reality of a Serbian "Vietnam" in Bosnia's mountains and canyons.

The repeating by the Serbians of the Nazi wartime policy in Yugoslavia of mass atrocities and expulsions of civilians has resulted in a growing, and ever more effective Bosnian partisan resistance movement behind the lines of the Serbian occupation forces. Partisan warfare has escalated in the mountains of eastern Bosnia, a region inhabited by Bosnian Muslims before Serbia's "ethnic cleansing" began. The military-age men of the expellees are returning to their home region. These village lads know every square inch of this "impassable" terrain, every cave, every mountain spring, every rock. They are putting this knowledge to good use.

The unreported reality of the partisan war can be perceived in the locations mentioned in the Serbian war communiqués put out by the Belgrade news agency, Tanjug, in a dispatch dated Sept. 14. Tanjug reported "heavy fighting" around besieged Gorazde, and around Visegrad, a town in eastern Bosnia, taken by the Serbians months ago, and lying well behind the "front line" in Bosnia. Visegrad is a key link in the Serbian military supply route, both to Gorazde, and to Sarajevo. The same pattern is true in northern Bosnia, in the hills above the broad Sava Plains corridor taken by the Serbians, linking Serbia with the main Serbian concentration in the western Bosnia region of Banja Luka.

The territory of Bosnia was the main bastion of the very successful partisan resistance against the Nazi occupation forces in World War II. If the international community continues to abandon Bosnia, the Bosnians will again use irregular warfare to drive out the invaders.