

Fight rages over appeasement of Serbs

by Nora Hamerman

On Feb. 2, the London *Times* reported that a British television documentary aired that night on Serbian atrocities against Bosnian Muslims was “likely to prompt outrage and calls for more western intervention in Bosnia.” The new atrocity claims, broadcast on the “Dispatches” program of Britain’s Channel 4, featured “harrowing descriptions of castration, mass murder and rape” by survivors of two prison camps in northern Bosnia. On the same day, Azra Smajovic, a member of a war crimes commission set up by the Bosnian government, charged that 30,000 Bosnian women have been raped as victims of a systematic, official war policy while in Serbian captivity.

EIR believes it is very likely that sometime during February, gruesome reports of the extent of the mass starvation in the Serbian-surrounded Muslim “ghettos” throughout central and eastern Bosnia will reach the western nations and galvanize a public outcry for a military intervention. On Feb. 2, the U.N. imposed a halt on all aid convoys in Bosnia, aside from the relief effort for Sarajevo, after a Serbian rocket attack on a convoy. These supplies, woefully insufficient, were the food lifeline for an estimated 1 million Bosnian Muslims.

Vance-Owen plan ‘illegal’

But until this policy reversal comes, the cynical peace “effort” of U.N. negotiator, former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and EC negotiator Lord David Owen, will mask a last phase of buying time for Serbia to further its war conquest goals in Bosnia. The Vance-Owen “peace plan” calls for dividing Bosnia into ten ethnically determined provinces with a weak federal government—to be enforced by NATO troops. It has been agreed to by Dr. Radovan Karadzic, the mad psychiatrist who runs the Bosnian Serbian forces.

Addressing the U.S. Helsinki Commission in Washington on Feb. 4, Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzik denounced the Vance-Owen plan as “illegal” and said that “it holds the seeds of renewed violence and terror.” He asked not for foreign troops, but merely the chance to fight the Serbs, including the following:

- that all heavy weaponry be placed under physical international control, so that the Karadzic-led Serbs in Bosnia would not remain in possession of it;
- lifting the siege of Sarajevo, Bosnia’s capital;
- lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia;
- bombing the Serbs if they do not lift the siege.

He told senators that it would take two to three months for Bosnia-Herzegovina to defend itself against the present onslaught.

Objectively speaking, military intervention against Serbia could be very successful, provided the western role is based on logistically aiding the Croatian and Bosnian Defense Forces, who together form the highly motivated, large ground-combat forces that western commentators pretend “do not exist” for a military offensive. The aim of such ground operations must be to re-establish the 1991 *status quo ante* borders of the republics of former Yugoslavia. At relatively low cost for the allied forces, the war could be brought to an end on a just basis.

The Serbian military position is much weaker than western media reports suggest. Serbia’s conquest of much of Bosnia has critically weakened its forces facing Croatia’s Army in the Serbian-occupied areas of Croatia. Excepting eastern Slavonia and eastern Bosnia, all the Serbian forces engaged against Bosnia and Croatia depend for re-supply and reinforcement on the narrow corridor in north Bosnia connecting them to Serbia. Simply cutting that corridor

would surround and entrap the bulk of the Serbian forces in a Balkan version of the World War II "Stalingrad pocket."

Russians not immediate threat

One excuse for the West's inaction to aid Bosnia has been the fear that Russia would rush in to bolster its Serbian allies. For many reasons, starting with the worsening of Russia's internal economic-political crisis expected between now and April, European strategic experts discount any danger of a big Russian military move, nor is a Russian-led pro-Serbian "Pan-Slavic Axis" in the cards.

Russian Pan-Slavism has historically had Germany as its main "enemy image," but at present, Russia is in dire need of economic ties and aid from Germany. Indeed, the vice-chairman of the parliamentary caucus of the ruling German Christian Democratic Union, Hornhues, reports that the Russians are offering to form a Russian-German counter-weight to the U.S.A. As long as self-preservation figures in Russian actions, a Pan-Slavic policy will likely be avoided because:

- All warring parties in former Yugoslavia—Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims—are Slavs.
- The two largest Slavic nations after Russia, Poland, and Ukraine, are anti-Serbian. They identify with Croatia for historical and cultural reasons, including their centuries of suffering under Great Russian expansionism.
- A Pan-Slavic doctrine would wreck the Russia-Romania Axis backing Serbia, as the non-Slavic Romanians would view a Pan-Slavic revival as the forerunner to a Russian seizure of the ethnically Romanian Republic of Moldova.
- Pan-Slavism would lead to incalculable destabilization of the multi-ethnic Russian Federation itself, enraging its already restive Muslim minorities, centered in the autonomous republics of the North Caucasus, and strategically important regions such as Tatarstan and Bashkiria between Moscow and the Urals.

Any Russian response in the Balkans in the short term is more likely to come as an increase in the Russian mercenary "volunteers," further logistical assistance, and oil products. Otherwise, Russia—which has already endorsed the Vance-Owen plan—can be expected to wield its U.N. veto right to prevent any effective military intervention under U.N. auspices.

Who's ranting?

The British are particularly committed to the strategy of appeasing the Serbians. After a Jan. 26 cabinet session, Prime Minister John Major sent a letter to President Clinton, urging the U.S. not to intervene. On Jan. 27, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd addressed the Royal Institute for International Affairs, proclaiming that Britain will not intervene in the Balkans. He averred, in what must be called magical contrast to the Gulf war against Iraq, that Britain lacks the available ground and other forces to participate. "We don't even have two battalions" to spare, he claimed

(quotes, page 36).

Only the Imperial Lords know how to throw a really vulgar temper tantrum at their colonies: Witness the public flaunting of imperial arrogance and blunt talk by Lord David Owen. The Viceroy has taken to the mass media to rave at the United States that it should stop flirting with the idea of an independent military intervention against Serbian aggression and get into line behind all the other U.N. Security Council members who want to certify the Vance-Owen agreement—"the only act in town," as Owen called it in a Feb. 3 interview with the *New York Times*.

"Against all the odds, even against my own expectations, we have more or less got a settlement," Owen said. "But we have a problem. We can't get the Muslims on board. And that's largely the fault of the Americans, because the Muslims won't budge while they think Washington may come into it on their side any day now."

"Don't try to tell us about the outrages that have been committed by the Serbs and, to a lesser degree, by everyone else in this war," Owen sneered. "This could be the big prize for Clinton. If he wants a new policy, then he should stop all of this loose talk about using force, make it clear to Izetbegovic that he's got no real alternative to these negotiations, work with us on improving the map, and then send American troops as part of a NATO force."

But, Owen went on, Bosnian President "Izetbegovic will not sit down at the table for that or anything else, as long as the Muslims think that military help may be on the way, either arms shipments or actual outside intervention." He said the map of ten provinces could be renegotiated. "That's no problem if the Americans put the right kind of pressure." But, he warned, "there are limits to how much conquered territory you can reclaim back from an army that has not been defeated on the battlefield."

When McCloskey, a Democratic congressman from Indiana, challenged the Vance-Owen assessment of Serbian dictator Milosevic as trustworthy on the MacNeil Lehrer Newshour on Feb. 2, Owen lost control: "And I'll say, listening to the congressman, what's his alternative? Bomb and destroy the whole of Serbia, take on Milosevic, fight, put American GIs into Serbia and take them on?"

McCloskey replied, "I'm not advocating a substantial invasion and particularly, like Mr. Christopher, I've not endorsed ground forces, but I will say selective or even numerous air strikes on particular targets, if you will, in both Bosnia and perhaps even Serbia, and indeed, letting . . . arm themselves. . . . The only real language that the Serbian leaders and their Bosnian allies understand is force." Lord Owen rejoined, "But give up negotiations, as the congressman seems to want to do, and go in with a plan which you can't even get your chiefs of staff to agree to, and start lecturing us, who've actually got troops on the ground about what to do, is not a policy. It's a rant, and that's what we've heard on this program, a rant."