

United Nations goes to war for Serbia

by Katharine Kanter

On Oct. 7, in an action described by the London *Times* as “unprecedented,” but which has been ignored by western public opinion, U.N. Protection Forces (Unprofor) troops drove about 550 Bosnian troops out of the demilitarized zone south of Sarajevo. French soldiers first fired warning shots, and then blew up the Bosnian bunkers and trenches. Maj. Kos Sol, a U.N. spokesman, said that air strikes against the Bosnians could not be excluded, and, Reuters reported, U.N. Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi threatened the Bosnian government with air strikes against their forces if they did not withdraw.

The implications of this cannot be overstated: Two superpowers, France and England, are now openly, militarily engaged on the Serbian side, against a country with a population of 4 million which has been isolated and under siege for almost three years.

The demilitarized zone around Sarajevo was created at Serbian request in August 1993, after the Serbian advance on Mounts Igman and Bjelasnica was stopped following an international uproar. The Bosnians succeeded in opening a path across Mount Igman, which remains at present *the only land route to the city* open to the Bosnian government, and which the Serbians have tried repeatedly to cut.

Media hoax sets a precedent

The Unprofor action, which, it is now believed, will leave the land route vulnerable to being cut at any time, was undertaken following a 24-hour front-page press and television campaign, repeating Unprofor accusations that the Bosnian Army had “massacred and mutilated” 16 Serbians and 4 nurses, ripping out human hearts with a dagger and so forth, at the headquarters of the Third Battalion of the Second Brigade of the Serbian rebel militia forces which was stormed by the Bosnian Army in a successful pin-prick action. Buried in the small print, the U.N. and western media admitted on Oct. 8 that the “mutilation” story was a complete hoax—

but a hoax designed to set a *precedent* for U.N. military intervention against the Bosnian Army. As western public opinion went into a flap over “mutilation” and “excised” hearts, the Unprofor move slipped by under cover of darkness.

Executed on orders of the British commanding officer, Gen. Sir Michael Rose, the Unprofor action follows hard on the heels of the disastrous agreement by the United States in the U.N. Security Council on Sept. 29, not to break the consensus in the Contact Group (England, France, Russia, Germany, United States) by lifting sanctions against Bosnia-Herzegovina unilaterally.

Just before the Unprofor action, Rose and top U.N. officials had met at Pale with the Bosnian Serb leadership in talks described by the *Times* as “remarkably cordial. . . . Both sides now have a tactical interest in fending off American demands via NATO for bombing targets. . . . In private, U.N. officials are practically frothing at the mouth at what they see as American folly.”

Asked whether the coincidence of U.N. and Bosnian Serb interests was discussed at the Pale meeting, a U.N. official told the English daily, “They did not need to speak about something so obvious.”

Bosnia is being thrown to the wolves. What, for a number of reasons, the U.S. administration prefers not to “register” at the moment (but it is sufficiently informed), is that should Bosnia fall to Serbia, war throughout continental Europe becomes inevitable. The lifting of sanctions, not against Bosnia, but against Serbia, decided in the Security Council in September, was premised on manifestly false statements by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, to the effect that the Bosnian-Serbian border had been sealed, and that no men or matériel from the Yugoslavian National Army were moving over the border.

According to the U.N.’s own officers, on the night of Oct. 1 alone, 55 helicopter flights took off around Srebrenica

and along the Posavina corridor between Brcko and Prijedor. Military experts have said that as the Bosnian Serb insurgents of Radovan Karadzic have only 30 helicopters, aviation fuel and the loan of Yugoslavian helicopters and pilots from over the Serbian border is certain. It would take 4-5,000 troops to seal the 350-mile Serbian-Bosnian border, along which a measly 93 unarmed U.N. monitors are now stationed. As the monitors can, in any event, only spot overland traffic, the Serbians have taken to the air.

Following U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry's remarks to the press during the NATO meeting in Seville, Spain, on Oct. 8-9 to the same effect, on Oct. 5 State Department spokesman Mike McCurry told the press that "there have been reports that there are goods—other than humanitarian—that might be coming over the border." The Oct. 7 *International Herald Tribune*, quoting unnamed administration officials, reported that the reason the United States has not acted upon myriad reports that Bosnian-Serbian border is an open sieve, is that there is "disagreement within the administration over whether to share intelligence reports that the U.S. does have with the [U.N.] Security Council. The sources and methods are such that some people in the intelligence community *want to withhold* what we have" (emphasis added).

This is window-dressing for a political decision by the administration to make a major concession over Serbia, to what is perceived as "hard-liners" in Russia, because the administration does not feel prepared to break with what is really bothering the Russians, namely International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic policy.

The deal is on

How far the deal with England and Russia has gone, is reflected in papers written for *Die Presse* in Vienna and for the *Berliner Tageszeitung* by Balkans expert Andreas Zumach; one source within the Contact Group told him: "Between us and Milosevic, there is now a tactical alliance of interests." Zumach wrote that "the Contact Group has told Milosevic they will agree to a confederation between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia."

According to Zumach, Lord David Owen has already proposed on the highest level the exchange of territories between Croatia and Serbia—Serbia now occupies 30% of Croatian territory including the wealthy Krajina region—in order that the Serbians gain direct access to the Adriatic. This is apparently what U.S. Ambassador to Zagreb Peter W. Galbraith referred to in a press briefing at the Carnegie Endowment in early October in Washington—a supposedly "secret" plan for a settlement of the eastern Croatian problem which, said Galbraith, has the approval of the Russian ambassador in Zagreb, and which is already being referred to as the "Galbraith Plan" in the press. In other words, it's U.S. policy—for the moment. Galbraith endorsed "self-government" for the Serbs in the Serbian-occupied areas of Croatia, based on what he called the "census of 1991," and called

for Croatian guarantees for minority rights for the Serbs in Croatia, blaming Croats for "destroying 5,000 Serbian homes."

Milosevic, according to Zumach's reports, recently told Contact Group members that he will get the Bosnian Serb leaders Karadzic and Momcila Krajisnik out of the way, because both oppose the Contact Group's 50-50 partition plan and want to keep the 70% of Bosnia they presently occupy. If Belgrade fails to force these two out of office, they will be liquidated, or arrested and handed over to the International Court in The Hague for war crimes. Milosevic proposes Nikola Koljevic, Mayor Radic of Banja Luka, and two politicians from Belgrade to be Bosnia Serb leaders. Ratko Mladic, who commands the rebel forces in Bosnia, is to get a high-level post in Belgrade.

In Belgrade, Serbian officials are now openly stating that the Contact Group has offered to lift all remaining trade and economic sanctions against Serbia if only it recognizes the international borders of Croatia and Bosnia. On Oct. 6, following Owen's glowing report to the Security Council for the lifting of sanctions, the Serbians boldly announced that, the first western capital to which the newly reopened Yugoslavian airlines will fly, will be, you guessed it, London.

Emboldened by all these diplomatic successes, and as part of their strategy worked out with General Rose, the Serbians are now in "negotiations" with U.N. Special Envoy Akashi over their demands, formulated on Sept. 25, that the airport of Sarajevo be leased to them for a symbolic sum, so that they can then claim the right to run the facilities—in other words, starve out the Bosnian government. Akashi declared on Oct. 10 that this would not be done until "the area around Sarajevo returns to normal," whatever that may mean.

The Rose plan is to starve Bosnia

But Sarajevo is not "normal"; it is starving. The food warehouses for winter stocks are reported to be at 10% of capacity, or three days' stocks, and this year, no international aid alert has been put out to prepare for winter. Water and electricity supply are only sporadic. The Serbians, according to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), are neither "allowing" land convoys with food into Sarajevo, nor are they allowing *any* fuel convoys in, and, without fuel, the U.N. cannot distribute the food—assuming there is any. Elsewhere, apart from the province of Tuzla, things are even worse. Almost nothing has gotten through to the strategically critical enclaves of eastern Bosnia (Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa) since Sept. 22. Only on Oct. 5 did the Bosnian Serbs "allow" land convoys to move through Serbian-occupied territory to the government-held areas of eastern Bosnia and to Sarajevo—bearing in mind that Unprofor can ram through a convoy by force of arms at any time. In the Bihac area, where there is a major Serbian offensive ongoing, the Serbians have been allowed to block all convoys, according to the U.N.'s own officers.