

Why Hasan Cengic, the architect of Bosnia's resistance, is leaving

by Umberto Pascali

On Nov. 4, Bosnia-Herzegovina President Alija Izetbegovic announced that Deputy Defense Minister Hasan Cengic will be removed from his position, following a ferocious campaign that accused him of being "close to Iran," and an ultimatum from the United States, that either Cengic be removed, or the United States would not implement the "equip and train" program, i.e., Bosnia would not be enabled to withstand a possible new assault by the Greater Serbians.

The anti-Cengic operation, which is aimed at undermining the group around the Bosnia President, was initiated by London and the Kissinger-Gingrich circles in the United States, and then forced down the throat of the Clinton administration.

The interview with Faris Nanic immediately following this article, was conducted two days before U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said:

"Ah! Is there progress on equip-and-train? Let me just say that I'm going to depart from my normal practice here. I'm going to name a name. The United States has determined that the Bosnian Federation deputy defense minister, Hasan

Cengic, personally maintains close ties to Iran. . . .

"Now while senior Bosnian officials have assured us that Mr. Cengic will be replaced, the United States has decided that the \$100 million worth of equipment, some of which is on the ship anchored just outside of Ploce, will not be delivered to the Federation until Mr. Cengic is relieved of his responsibilities, formally and publicly."

When asked, "What do you mean by personal ties? Can you be more specific?" Burns answered: "I can't be more specific."

Burns gave a similar comment a few days later when many correspondents asked him to be more specific. *EIR's* correspondent at the State Department briefing made the point that Cengic "obviously was responsible for procuring weapons for the Bosnians. He turned to the Iranians. He also turned to [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John] Shalikashvili; he turned to many people to get arms, and succeeded in getting them. But you give the impression that he's some kind of Iranian agent just because of this operation, which was—at least if not condoned, the U.S. looked the other way when it was done. How can that be a condemnation of a person, since what we're getting from Bosnia is that he is very close, not so much to the Iranians, but to Izetbegovic, that's where his loyalty lies, and that, therefore, the reaction from the Bosnian government to the request by the U.S. has been very strong . . . ? Do you have anything more concrete?"

An ideal bridge

In reality, nobody could be more specific on the so-called "sins of Cengic," simply because the attack against the man who guaranteed Bosnia's ability to militarily resist Greater Serbian aggression, has strategic motivations behind it. As Nanic explains: "In the future, Bosnia can represent an ideal bridge between East and West, between the Islamic countries of the Middle East and Central Asia" and the West.

Bosnia is the only "Western" country with a Muslim majority. Because of its resistance to genocide and its rejection of racism, it has become a rallying point for all those who oppose British geopolitics, in their colonial and "neo"-colonial version. Principled support for Bosnia, for its sovereignty and economic development, represents for the United States an historic opportunity to link up with the countries of Africa and Asia, to be, not a bad imitation of the British system, but



Behind the recent negative turn in U.S. policy toward Bosnia, are Henry Kissinger's demands that the nation be partitioned.



A Schiller Institute delegation visits the Bosnian Defense Ministry in April 15, 1996. Left to right: Defense Ministry spokesman Faris Nanic; Umberto Pascali, Schiller Institute; Paolo Raimondi, Schiller Institute; Deputy Defense Minister Hasan Cengic; Nihad Dzinovic, Schiller Institute.

a force which helps realize the American System, through collaboration for development.

This potentiality to finally embark on an "American" foreign policy, is what has London so scared. Any attempt to consolidate a real alliance between Bosnia and President Clinton has been met with a full mobilization of the "fifth column" of Kissinger, Gingrich, and Bush.

It started with Kissinger

The immediate roots of the "Cengic case," are to be found in San Diego, California, on Aug. 14. There, during the Republican Convention, some of the people most responsible for the Bosnian genocide were given a podium by the International Republican Institute (IRI), including Lawrence Eagleburger and Henry Kissinger. They explained that Bosnia would become an "electoral issue," for Republicans to attack Clinton. Of course, Kissinger never stopped calling for the partition of Bosnia, but now, the psychological warfare would be based on the equation that "Bosnians equal fundamentalists."

One month earlier, on July 9, Clinton had "certified" that Bosnia was ready to receive official U.S. military aid. The President said: "I am pleased to announce the start of the U.S.-led train and equip program for the Armed Forces of the Bosnian Federation. The purpose of this program is to assist in providing Bosnia with the ability to defend itself, and thereby promote security and stability in the region. The program will also help ensure that upon IFOR [the U.S.-led implementation force] departure, a military balance exists among the former warring parties so that none of them are encouraged to resume hostilities.

"I am very pleased to say that this afternoon, the Bosnian

Federation Parliament adopted a new Defense Law. Bosnian President Izetbegovic and Federation President Zubak have overcome many significant issues in order for the Defense Law to become reality. . . . With the passage of the law, the Bosnian government has made good on its commitments. Now we can make good on ours: The U.S.-led, international train and equip program will begin immediately."

With that announcement, President Clinton explicitly recognized that the Bosnia Federation had guaranteed the departure of any significant force of voluntary soldiers who had been active in Bosnia during the Greater Serbian aggression. But the British did everything to keep alive the image of the "Iranian mujahideen" lurking in the Bosnian mountains. The irony is that, in fact, it had been some of the most conservative Republicans who had advocated the "Afghanistan solution" for Bosnia, i.e., that the administration should have favored sending "Islamic fighters" to "help" the Bosnians, without caring too much for appearances. It is also sadly ironic that the British intelligence agency MI-6, had been caught red-handed in creating and deploying synthetic "Islamic fighters," as a means to trigger Muslim-Croatian confrontation.

For a while, the Clinton administration resisted the London-engineered campaign. On Aug. 14, for example, in the same room where Nicholas Burns would later blast Cengic, one of Burns's colleagues, Glyn Davies, cut short questions on the "Iranians." "Well," he said, "maybe I can shorten this by simply saying that we have sufficient assurance in the United States government that the organized groups that existed at one time, of non-Bosnian fighters, has been disbanded. And that was why we made a decision to let the train-and-equip program go forward."

Kissinger: Accept the results of genocide

On Sept. 8, Kissinger intervened, asking for a "realistic" U.S. foreign policy based on partition of Bosnia and acceptance of genocide. "The *only sensible electoral process and one most compatible with America's historic commitment . . . would be a plebiscite in each ethnic region on the simple choice between a multi-ethnic Bosnia and some sort of partition. . . .* Realistically, a separate Muslim entity may be the best achievable outcome. It would be the solution most compatible with the principle of self-determination and most conducive to long-term stability. . . . *There are no innocent parties in Bosnia.*"

This is not done, says Kissinger, because of the Clinton administration's "desire to avoid a foreign policy debate in the middle of an electoral campaign."

Then came the escalation. On Sept. 22, *Washington Post* writer John Pomfret launched his by-now-famous Goebbels-style attack on Cengic, Izetbegovic, Nanic, and the "TWRA network," and decried that "how Bosnia's Muslim-led [sic] government evaded a UN arms embargo." But the sting was reserved for Clinton, while the Presidential elections were approaching: "The Clinton administration knew about TWRA. . . . Still, the U.S. took no action. . . . 'We were told by Washington to watch them but not interfere,' a senior Western diplomat said."

Then, on Oct. 10, a Gingrich-sponsored House subcommittee, which held hearings on the "U.S. role in Iranian Arms Transfers to Croatia and Bosnia," released its findings. The target: the Clinton administration's "green light policy" toward Iran's arms sales to Croatia and Bosnia. A high-level Bosnian source commented, "They are interested in a propaganda ploy against President Clinton. The terrible damage this electoral game will do to Bosnia, to its fragile institutions, to its relations to the U.S., until now considered its closest friend and ally—all this is of no concern to them."

At that point, an electoral "scapegoat" was inevitable. Then, President Izetbegovic declared: "Yes, it is a dictate but . . . any problem we are faced with, soon becomes: What must we do to *avoid the potential danger a renewed genocide against our people?* This is always the ultimate and higher criterion. . . . We chose to cooperate militarily with the U.S., because we think that this cooperation gives us more guarantees *against a possible new aggression in the future. . . .* Some of our neighbors are waiting to see us stick our tongue at America, just to be able to impose pressure on us afterwards. . . . *However, taking all conditions into account, America is a greater friend to us than many of them. . . .* Both of us, Hasan Cengic and I, we are soldiers. We are going to do what we are supposed to."

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