

London urges partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina

by Michael Liebig

The brutal Serbian attack on Bihac signals the beginning of a new phase of the war in former Yugoslavia. The decisive issue will not be whether Bihac, like the Croatian city of Vukovar in November 1991, is totally conquered by the Serbs. It is likely that Bihac will be made into a second Gorazde. But even if Bihac were "only" encircled, the Bosnian government would lose all control over this strategically important city.

The Serbian attack on Bihac has two direct military-logistical objectives. First, the aim is to consolidate the Serbian land corridor along the Belgrade-Brcko-Gradacac-Banja Luka-Bihac-Knin line, which links Serbia to its conquered territories in Bosnia and Croatia, in which the railway from Knin to Banja Luka has special significance. Second, the attack on the "U.N.-protected zone" of Bihac, without any serious interference from the United Nations or NATO, creates a precedent for the other Muslim enclaves (Gorazde, Zepa, Srebrenica) in eastern Bosnia, which, like Bihac, are "U.N.-protected zones." These Muslim enclaves still stand in the way of a contiguous Serbian occupied zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serbian leadership has decided on the liquidation of these enclaves—by military and/or "political-diplomatic" means. In the course of their military operations against Bihac, the Serbian leadership sees itself as having obtained a decisive piece of this objective.

Serbia and the 'Triple Alliance'

There are, in fact, certain tactical differences between the Serbian leadership in Belgrade around President Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leadership in Pale around Radovan Karadzic ("Bosnian Serbs"), and the Serbian leadership in Knin ("Krajina Serbs"). However, the Serbian military operations against Bihac show the true extent of the political-

military *integration* of the Serbian camp. The main strategic goal of this Greater Serbian leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains the elimination of this internationally recognized sovereign state, which is to be chopped into three parts. The bulk of Bosnian territory would become Serbian and attached to the "Serbian motherland." Croatia must be "satisfied" with a major part of Herzegovina, while for the Muslim Bosnians there remains an economically and politically unviable "reservation" made up of the leftovers. In this Greater Serbian objective, which Lord David Owen most clearly expressed to the world public, nothing has changed since the war began in April 1992.

This Greater Serbian Plan of Action is at the same time the operational basis of British, French, and Russian policy toward former Yugoslavia. This was manifested concretely in the Serbian attack on Bihac. Prior to the major Serbian offensive, the French Unprofor troops were withdrawn from the "U.N.-protected zone" in Bihac and replaced by a poorly equipped and scantily armed contingent from Bangladesh. When the Serbian troops overran the Muslim "protected zone," Unprofor commander Gen. Sir Michael Rose refused to call for NATO air attacks, so as "not to endanger the civilian population." Bosnian Vice President Ejub Ganic observed in this regard, "People who are sitting in tanks and shooting on the civilian population in Bihac, are hardly to be designated as 'endangered civilians.' Such persons should be the target of NATO air strikes. We should remember how General Rose waited at first until the Serbian tanks had reached the outskirts of the city of Gorazde. Then Rose rejected NATO air strikes, because they would put the civilian population in danger. The same trick is being repeated in Bihac."

We ought to add that not one of the few air strikes which

have been carried out so far against the Serbians, was “real” in the military sense. The Serbians were constantly informed in advance by Unprofor, and requested to withdraw soldiers and modern military matériel out of the battle zone. What got bombed was old, unmanned matériel of the Serbians which had been put into place as a convenient target.

The attitude of the London and Paris governments, of “mediators” Lord Carrington or Lord Owen, General Rose, and U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is determined by this policy of dismembering Bosnia-Herzegovina right down to the details. The endless diplomatic tactics and maneuvers over alleged “negotiated solutions” are less and less able to camouflage the actual direction and thrust of British Balkans policy. The British-French-Russian “Triple Entente” in the Balkans aims at the maximum weakening of Bosnia. This nation must be so ground down, by all political-military means, that the Bosnian leadership finds itself ready for capitulation and surrender. The policy of the arms embargo against the Bosnian government is exclusively a matter of keeping Bosnia down militarily, while everything else is transparently diplomatic deception tactics. The presence of British and French Unprofor troops in Bosnia has served for the last two years for no other purpose than as a means of limiting the military and political maneuvering room of the Bosnian government on the ground, and imposing an “equivallence” between Serbian aggressors and Bosnian victims of aggression.

Bihac: a battle lost, not a war

The dismemberment strategy of the British-steered Triple Entente against Bosnia had now reached a decisive point with the attack on Bihac. British diplomacy wants, by means of this military operation of the Serbs, to produce the impression in world public opinion that the Bosnian war is militarily “conclusively decided,” that there is no way out of the Serbian-created “fait accompli” in Bosnia, that the Bosnian Army is “definitively too weak” to force a shift against the Serbians in battle, and that “it’s not worth it” to risk a breach in NATO and to endanger relations with Moscow over a “lost cause.” Statements by U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry on Nov. 28, which could be interpreted in that sense, were massively played up in the international news media.

Now, according to the thrust of the British-led Triple Entente, a “negotiated solution” should be imposed by the combined pressures of the “contact group” (Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and the United States) which would take into account these alleged “military realities” in Bosnia. Likewise, the arms embargo against Bosnia will now be strictly upheld, because lifting it would only help to prolong an “already lost” war. By the same token, further threats of NATO air strikes are completely “senseless,” because these are “ineffective” against the “victorious” Serbians, and only give the Bosnians “false hopes.” At bottom, what the Triple Alliance wants, is for the Bosnian government to finally own



British support for the Serbs is coming under increasing international attack. Here, members of the Bosnia Support Committee picket the British Embassy in Washington on Nov. 30, in front of a statue of Winston Churchill. The group is protesting British opposition to air strikes on Bosnia and a lifting of the arms embargo.

up to its irreversible downfall and yield at last to its fate. In practice, this means that Bosnia-Herzegovina is chopped into three parts. Bosnia would have to accept its fate as an unviable Muslim rump “state” under Serbian overlordship. Serbia would then be the unchallenged hegemonic power in south-eastern Europe.

The American position is decisive

The second prong of the British-led Triple Entente is aimed against the United States. In February 1993, the U.S. government dealt a heavy blow to British Balkans strategy with its “Washington Accord,” in which the Clinton administration brought the absurd fratricidal war between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina to an end. A Muslim-Croatian Federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina was set up, with the participation of Serbs loyal to the nation. The United States thereby stood up against the partition of the Bosnian state by criteria of “nationality.” At the same time, the United

States succeeded in getting Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to agree to collaborate closely in political, economic, and military matters.

Undermining this Croatian-Bosnian "Washington Accord" became a high priority of British diplomacy. London knew, and knows perfectly well, that already in the medium term, an effective military alliance between Croats and Muslims spells serious military trouble for Serbia. An effective Bosnian-Croat military alliance, with sufficient arms supplies (with or without the formal lifting of the arms embargo) would be in a position to roll back the Serbian attackers and militarily liberate its national territory.

British diplomacy aims therefore at thoroughly weakening the forces within the Clinton administration and within the U.S. political class which are standing firm behind the "Washington Accord." British diplomacy, for example, relies on the incoming Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, who, like George Bush before him, has asserted that the Bosnian conflict is a "purely European affair," which has no meaning for the United States. In addition, elements inside the Clinton administration consider the war in Bosnia to be a "civil war," which is not "worth" risking the unity of NATO over. Against these voices, the Republican Majority Leader in the Senate, Robert Dole (Kan.), has clearly stated what is really at stake in Bosnia. Dole said during his last visits to London and Brussels that:

1) Great Britain and France have supported Serbia's aims from the outset;

2) Great Britain and France have done everything to prevent NATO from showing Serbia what the limits are with effective air strikes;

3) Great Britain and France have used the United Nations to maintain the weapons embargo against Bosnia, even though 90 nations are ready to help Bosnia.

Therefore, Dole demanded, the arms embargo must be lifted and the withdrawal of Unprofor troops must begin. Dole backed the "Washington Accords" and said, "The last thing we need now is another change in the U.S. position toward Bosnia."

Franjo Tudjman's intrigues

With the intention of torpedoing the "Washington Accord," British diplomacy has been exerting enormous pressure on the government of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman. This British influence, which has been rounded out by economic and financial pressures from the International Monetary Fund, led Tudjman to sabotage any effective military cooperation with the Bosnian government. Even though Tudjman had signed the "Washington Accord," he kept the agreements from being put into force. That was shown with particular drama during the Serbian offensive against Bihac, which was launched from the Croatian region in Krajina. Military units of "Krajina Serbs" make up a high proportion of the Serbian forces which are attacking Bihac.

Tudjman's passivity is all the more strange, since the best Serbian units were transferred in early November out of Krajina toward northwestern Bosnia, and the occupied zone is thus militarily exposed. In Zagreb it had been expected that Tudjman would have at least undertaken *limited* military advances into Krajina, so as to reconquer parts of this region and to demonstrate at least minimal support for the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian Army in Bihac. But even such an action, in a "cabinet warfare" sense, seems unlikely.

Tudjman's two-faced policy seems to aim at striking an arrangement with Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade. Secret negotiations between Zagreb and Belgrade have been carried out by Tudjman practically since Croatian independence in the summer of 1991. Tudjman seems to be hoping for a diplomatic arrangement with Milosevic, in which he would get the return of *some* of the Serbian-occupied regions in Croatia, for example western Slavonia. As for the other occupied regions of Croatia, he seems to want to write them off *de facto*, as long as diplomatic formulas can preserve the abstract legal titles to them on Croatia's side. It goes without saying that the British-steered "Triple Entente" is vigorously backing up Tudjman in this—all the more so, because the intended threefold partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina is being presented to Tudjman as a territorial "compensation" for the loss of parts of the Croatian state.

The Croatian opposition movement

The majority of the Croatian people, however, and the extremely important Catholic Church of Croatia is against such a deal with Serbia at the cost of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of their own national interests. In the course of 1994, the Croatian opposition movement *Libertas* has been constantly growing in importance (see *EIR*, May 13, 1994, p. 55, and July 15, 1994, p. 46).

Libertas is constantly pointing out that such an arrangement with Milosevic will make Croatia into a satrapy of Serbia which is only apparently independent. The British-steered Triple Entente's intention to set up Serbia as the hegemonic state in the Balkans would thus be assured. Such a "neo-Yugoslavian" solution would put the economic potential of Croatia at the service of Serbia. The Croatian opposition, which stands for the unqualified fulfillment of the Washington Accord and especially for an effective Croatian-Bosnian military alliance, constantly points to the objective strategic weakness of Serbia, which over the medium term will become evident. The British leadership knows these objective factors of weakness of Serbia. Precisely for this reason, the Triple Entente is pushing now with all its might to put the dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina "on the negotiating table."

General Spigelj's military-strategic analysis

A leading representative of the Croatian opposition is the former Croatian Defense Minister Martin Spigelj, who in

the autumn and winter of 1991 played the key role in thwarting the Serbian attempt to militarily crush independent Croatia. In an article for the Croatian newspaper *Posavski Glasnik*, General Spegelj wrote:

"We stand at the threshold of the third year of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia has fixed major war objectives for itself. It first sought to realize these aims with the aid of the former Yugoslavian People's Army and with the direct support of Great Britain, France, and the ultra-secret but momentous support of Russia. But the war objectives it set for itself were unrealistic. Serbia bit off more than it could chew, and is now in danger of choking on it. With its policy of aggression, Serbia has made all its neighbors into enemies. It must deploy large military forces into southern Serbia in the direction of Kosova, Macedonia, and Bulgaria; and Vojvodina is also not secure. In its westward aggression, Serbia has pushed up to 300 kilometers beyond its own borders. The occupied zones are very chopped up, and have an extraordinarily fragile front over 2,000 kilometers long. It is impossible in the long run to defend, let alone to actually control, the entire region.

"If we analyze the zones in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia which have been occupied for a long time, we see that this zone is not viable in its present condition. It is not tenable from the military-strategic standpoint, and is extraordinarily un-self-sufficient economically. Furthermore, Serbia's demographic potential is exhausted; the negative birth rate of the Serbian population is well known. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbian aggressor can put at most 70,000 soldiers into the field, together with 250 tanks and about 600 heavy-caliber artillery weapons. The combined armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Croatian units total about 230,000 men. The victim of the aggression—the internationally recognized nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina—has no other choice but to defend itself by all means and to free the country from the aggressor. As in Croatia, the aggressor was (and continues to be) extraordinarily brutal. He has conducted the entire war with war criminals' methods: genocide, ethnic cleansing, rapes, annihilation of open cities and settlements. All of this has created a lasting determination in the victims that the aggressor must be stopped and punished.

"It must be admitted that the Bosnia-Herzegovinian Army, despite unconceivable difficulties, has created the basis for solving the most important questions of the military struggle. With the Washington Accords, the senseless war between Bosnia and Croatia was ended. It is necessary that a real military alliance be created, which will pose the aggressor with unsolvable problems, and in time, vanquish him. The Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina has meanwhile achieved major advances. I would like first to emphasize the discipline, which is the first and unalterable condition for military effectiveness. The tactics, the operational leadership, and the military strategy have changed. They were going into most of the battles with the tactic of statically holding their posi-

tions. But now, more and more, mobile warfare is being conducted. They are seeking out and attacking the Serbs in weakly defended positions and weakly controlled zones. Part of the forces remain in the defense of important positions, but the larger part of the forces is advancing with guerrilla methods. These are larger military operations, and not just isolated diversions. We can see that the battle is being engaged where the enemy least expects it.

"Bosnia-Herzegovina's war technology industry has been moved into protected and secret zones, and is supplying the Army with increasing amounts of modern light weaponry and munitions. That was a gigantic effort, but it has been achieved. We must be cautious, because these are the first steps and the first beginnings of a shift. The aggressor can still win battles here and there, and there can also be important setbacks and crises, but the process of changing the military relations of forces is objectively unstoppable and will lead in the end to the defeat of the aggressor and the liberation of the nation as whole. Insofar as the Washington Accords are quickly and effectively fulfilled, this process will come about faster. In that regard, we must be very alert to the fact that certain forces continue to negotiate a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, even though it is obvious to everyone that this would mean the overthrow not just of the Croats in Herzegovina, but also of Croatia as a state.

Britain, France, Russia exposed

"Another characteristic of the present situation lies in the fact that the pro-Serbian policy of Great Britain, France, and Russia is finally totally exposed to the public. They have had to unmask themselves as the protectors of the aggressor, who began and continues to wage one of the most brutal wars in military history. These great powers, which are no longer such, have remained silent, or have indirectly supported the rise of Greater Serbia, erroneously believing that such a Serbia will serve as their own gendarme in the Balkans, with whose help they—just as in other periods—can provoke instability in the southeast of Europe and spread it throughout Europe. This is no doubt their anti-German policy to confine Germany's considerable economic power. This is why the British lobby has been intervening constantly and ever more vigorously into the U.N. and even into American institutions. In reality what these powers, and their policy, are up to, is assuring the creation of Greater Serbia over the victims of the aggression, and wielding it against central Europe, especially against Germany, but also against the United States. A "peace" which is based on the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, only means the continuation of the war to the benefit of the aggressor. I am an optimist, and repeat that a shift in the relation of forces to the benefit of the victim of aggression is unstoppable, even if there will be setbacks. That is something which neither the aggressor nor its international allies can prevent, without themselves being forced to become actively involved in the war."