
Documentation

Bosnian VP: 'Europe is in a situation like 1939'

The following are translated excerpts from an interview with Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic that appeared in the Danish paper Berlingske Tidende on Aug. 22:

Q: President Izetbegovic has declared that he is willing to accept some form of a three-way split of the country. If he signs such a peace settlement, will you and the Army respect it?

Ganic: No. He has to get it democratically accepted here in Sarajevo. The very basis of the negotiations is wrong. Owen and Stoltenberg have to openly state whether they accept ethnic cleansing as a basis for the peace settlement or not. They are trying to force us to do that in Geneva. If there were more openness concerning the negotiations, everybody would be able to see what it is that they are forcing us into.

I demand that Bosnia remain a united nation. We are occupied by Serbia and Croatia. Why make it more complicated than it is? We are squeezed in between these two powers. Perhaps it is our destiny, that all Bosnians are going to be killed. But nobody will ever force me to sign my own death warrant.

Q: You are very tough in your criticism of Great Britain and France. Why do you think that these two countries should be so opposed to the Bosnian Muslims?

Ganic: The British still have unsolved problems in relation to Germany, which they accuse of swallowing up the Balkans. Therefore, Great Britain wishes instability here. London equates the Bosnian Muslims with the Muslims they hate. The British U.N. troops only follow orders from London. Boutros-Ghali has practically no command over them. France is trying the well-known old colonial methods. They want to be where the other Great Powers are fighting. It's all a big mess of old European conflicts.

Q: The U.N. is now keeping the majority of the population of Sarajevo alive through a difficult emergency aid operation. Do you see any progress?

Ganic: The U.N. here in Sarajevo is totally irresolute and disoriented. It's almost tragi-comical to watch them. These are troops from different countries, each with their own policy. It is deeply tragic. In the end it may lead to the dissolution of the U.N. . . .

This is an experiment which Europe is going to regret. This virus of ethnic cleansing will spread, if it isn't stopped in Bosnia. Europe is in a situation like that of 1939.

Armenians struggle to break blockade

by Konstantin George

In July and August, the "war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Armenian-inhabited region of Karabakh," as it is generally called, has undergone a qualitative transformation, beyond the confines of Karabakh to cover large parts of Azerbaijan. In reality, the war has been not only "over Karabakh," but has been forced on Armenia by the crippling blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Earlier Armenian military operations had been confined to driving Azerbaijani forces out of Karabakh and breaking the encirclement and blockade of Karabakh by seizing the stretch of Azerbaijan territory separating Armenia proper from Karabakh. Between April 1992 and June 1993, Armenia had achieved both of these goals by military actions. By June it held firmly all of Karabakh plus two corridors to it: through Lachin in the south, and through Kelbecer in the north. The long-sought union of Karabakh with Armenia had been achieved. On Aug. 22, Armenia dropped all pretenses that Karabakh is independent, by appointing Sershevik Sarkisyan, the commander of the Karabakh Self-Defense Forces, and self-styled "defense minister" of Karabakh, as Armenia's new defense minister.

Armenian forces operating from Karabakh during July and August have fanned out to the northeast, east, and south, in a series of offensives deep into Azerbaijan proper. By the last week of August, some 20% of Azerbaijan was either in Armenian hands or totally cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan.

In July, the Armenians, advancing along the main road northeast out of Karabakh, captured the Azerbaijan district capital of Agdam, which had a pre-war population of 150,000. Now it is a ghost town. During the years of war that devastated Karabakh, Agdam had served as the forward headquarters and main base of the Azeri forces that had shelled and attacked Armenian towns inside Karabakh.

In August, Armenian forces pushed south from Karabakh and crushed the Azerbaijan defense lines. This breakthrough has put them in a position to advance to the Iran-Azerbaijan border at the Araks River any time they choose. These military operations concluded with the capture of two Azerbaijani towns, Fizuli and Jebrail, respectively on Aug. 22 and 24, and the advance of Armenian forces to within 15 kilometers of the Iranian border. Fizuli and Jebrail, like Agdam, were critical staging areas for the years of Azerbaijan attacks into Karabakh. All of southwestern Azerbaijan between Armenia-Karabakh and the Iranian border, is now either in Arme-

nian hands or defenseless.

For political reasons, Armenia has halted its advance short of the Iranian border in deference to Teheran, which has covertly supported Armenia. Iran has feared that a strong Azerbaijan would be a magnet for the over 10 million Iranian Azerbaijanis to join with the 7 million Azerbaijanis of the former U.S.S.R. in a "Greater Azerbaijan" project. The offensive has created a flow of up to 200,000 destitute Azerbaijani refugees. Should the Armenian drive continue, these refugees, now in the border strip on the Azerbaijan side of the Araks River, would flee into northwest Iran, which is ethnically Azerbaijani. Armenia has no intention of creating such problems for Iran, which is its only secure land link to the outside world.

The coming winter

Why did Armenia make such a fateful break from its original goal of rescuing its countrymen in Karabakh from the threat of either starvation or mass expulsion, to the apparent strategy of waging a war of conquest against Azerbaijan? Why did it risk becoming condemned as an "international outlaw state," in press commentaries that draw bogus comparisons between Armenia and Serbia?

The wartime function of Azerbaijani bases like Agdam, Fizuli, and Jebrail gives part of the answer. The July-August offensives created a *cordon sanitaire* around Karabakh and therefore were an extension of the defensive goal of securing it. In the July-August operations, Azerbaijani forces were cleared from the "heights," the mountains around Karabakh to the northeast, east, and south, and routed to the broad plains. The Armenians could easily have driven across these plains halfway to the Azerbaijan capital of Baku and the Caspian Sea, but refrained from doing so.

The second part of the answer is that Armenia is in a race against time to avoid a second, killer wartime winter. Last winter, many starved or froze to death because there was no heat available in a mountainous and plateau region notorious for its extremely cruel winters. The main purpose of the Armenian summer offensives is to force Azerbaijan to end the blockade before winter returns.

The fact that Agdam was captured in July and not June illustrates this strategy. By early June, Armenian forces had driven to within 500 yards of the town, and stopped. They took all the heights that overlook Agdam, but left the town and the road leaving it in Azerbaijani hands. After a month, and Azerbaijan refused to budge on the blockade, the Armenians took Agdam. The pattern repeated itself in Fizuli and Jebrail, both of which could have been taken in July; again, Armenian troops stopped, gave Azerbaijan a few weeks to "think it over," and only then captured these towns.

In early August, Armenian units crossed from the northern border of Armenia into Azerbaijan, advancing toward the district capital of Tauz, some 20-25 km from the border. The main rail line and road connecting Azerbaijan with Georgia

run through the Tauz area. This is one of three Azeri rail and road connections abroad. The other two are the lines along the Caspian Sea north into Russia, and south into Iran. The latter is blocked, due to a regional separatist revolt centered in the southeast Azerbaijan city of Lenkoran, where rebels have proclaimed a "Talysh Republic." The Armenians are now in position to impose a counter-blockade on Azerbaijan. This and other escalations can be expected, should Azerbaijan refuse to negotiate an end to its blockade of Armenia.

The question of Turkey

According to sources in Yerevan, Armenia, there is an additional military threat, coming from Turkey, which the sources say was covertly sending secret service agents into Armenia and Azerbaijan since 1988, and since 1991 has been sending direct military aid to Azerbaijan in the form of weapons, mercenaries, and advisers. Turkey joined the blockade of Armenia in April 1993, when the Turkish mass media launched a major anti-Armenian campaign.

EIR's sources say that on June 28, the Turkish newspaper *Huryet* reported that Bulent Ecevit, the chairman of Turkey's Left Democratic Party and a former prime minister, demanded that the Turkish Air Force open a corridor between Nakhichevan and Azerbaijan. He stated that all that was needed for this was the approval of President Elcibey of Azerbaijan. *Huryet* also reported on June 25 that a group of Turkish volunteers had arrived in Baku to take part in the war against Armenia. The Turkish minister of internal affairs declared that "in southeast Turkey, the terrorists who have attacked peaceful inhabitants are not Kurds, but Armenians." The Armenian sources see this as Turkish propaganda designed to prepare the ground for anti-Armenian aggression, by constantly raising the issue of alleged "Armenian terrorists." Moreover, on Aug. 17, a British newspaper ran a scenario for "five wars about to happen," of which one centered on Kurdistan. This scenario involved joint Turkish-Iranian-Syrian-Iraqi "genocidal" actions against the Kurds, after a massive escalation of Kurdish terrorism in the region.

In 1991, the Yerevan sources say, Turkey and its backers increased their presence in the Armenian provinces of Zaigezur and Karabakh, which lie in the projected path of gigantic oil and gas pipelines from Turkic-speaking Central Asia across the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, and Turkey to the Mediterranean.

The sources believe that Turkish aggressive appetites are only being restrained by: 1) Armenia's Armed Forces; 2) the presence of Russian troops on Armenian soil and Armenia's membership in the CIS collective security treaty; 3) the possible negative reaction of world public opinion. However, they say, "this has not kept Turkey from occupying part of Cyprus. Furthermore, the U.N. Security Council is abetting the aggressive policy of Azerbaijan and Turkey." In view of Russian power plays in the region, this Armenian reference to the presence of Russian forces as a guarantor of Armenian security sounds like a recipe for continuing war in the Transcaucasus.