
Bosnia-Herzegovina

Military gains upset diplomats' appellation

by Katharine Kanter

Although it is difficult to piece together a clear picture of what is actually happening on the ground in Bosnia, there is little doubt that over the last month, the Bosnian-Croatian agreement, Iranian arms supplies, and a sweeping reorganization of the Bosnian Armed Forces have considerably improved the Bosnian military position.

General Delic told the Bosnian paper *Liljan*: "We are improving our tactical positions, taking over high ground, in order to create the tactical conditions for larger-scale offensives." The Bosnian forces are now once again receiving weapons and supplies from the Croatian Adriatic coast, and have been able to redeploy troops earlier employed in fighting the Croats, against the Serbian lines. There has been heavy fighting reported throughout late May-early June north and south of Brcko, that is, along the Posavina Corridor, at Zvornik, Tesanj, and Doboj.

The Bosnians arrived at the Geneva negotiations in early June and demanded 58% of the territory, whereas they have been offered 51% under the Stoltenberg-Owen plan; they know the Serbians will reject that, and therefore, it is simply a way for the Bosnians to say, "We are going to fight."

The military has been reorganized

The results of the military reorganization have been noted by the Unprofor (so-called U.N. peacekeeping forces) general staff itself. In early June, one general told the Paris daily *Le Monde*: "Their troops have a very high morale, while it is dropping in the Serbian camp." The French General Soubirou told *Libération*, "The Bosnian Army, which is highly patriotic, is also extremely motivated, and I must admire the quality of the Bosnian General Staff in having dared to clean out undesirables from the ranks in the thick of enemy fire." And one Croatian military figure said, "These people are like the Viet Cong, with nerves of steel."

This is the context in which a huge row has broken out between Iran and England, over the question of Iranian arms supplies, perhaps through the old "Iran-Contra" pipeline, to Bosnia via Croatia—Iran being in fact the proxy here for the

United States. A worried article in the London *Guardian* two weeks ago pointed to U.S. "connivance" at Iranian weapons shipments, and to a series of economic agreements between Croatia and Iran, one of the supposedly secret conditions of which is that Bosnian supply routes for weapons be kept open. In early June, the Iranian government expelled the deputy head of the British Mission in Teheran, Hamish Cowell, following the expulsion in late May from London of the first secretary of the Embassy of Iran, Vahid Bolourchi. And the British Foreign Office published obviously forged letters on British policy toward Bosnia, which, the Foreign Office claims, are part of an Iranian propaganda campaign to promote anti-British sentiment among Muslims.

In May, Iran donated £1 million to Bosnia, and Teheran radio began a Bosnian-language transmission. At Teheran University, Friday prayer has been devoted to Bosnia for the past months.

The genie is out of the bottle

On the European front, by far the most important development is the withdrawal by Bernhard Henry-Lévy of his electoral list, called "Europe begins in Sarajevo," from the June 6 elections to the European Parliament. The list, which gathered about 20 leading philosophers and intellectuals who called for lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia and rejected the partition of that nation, was perceived by the French electorate as a kind of anti-establishment political movement and, after a mere week of existence, was already reaching between 5% and 12% of the vote according to opinion polls. The list would almost certainly have sent several Members of Parliament to the European Parliament at Strasbourg.

Suddenly, on May 30, Henry-Lévy announced that the list had "served its purpose" and made the cause sufficiently known, and would therefore not go to the vote. However, a group of "die-hards," including Prof. Leon Schwartzberg, Adm. Antoine Sanguinetti, Princess Gagarine (a Russian actress known as Marina Vlady), Alain Touraine, and Michel Polac said they would go to the end and try by any means to run, while the various local groups and collectives backing the initiative, have announced that they will try to have the voter blanks printed and distributed.

It is rumored that certain financial circles, including George Soros, put 100 million new francs into the "Sarajevo" operation, precisely in order to crash it. The idea being, to raise a wave of political excitement and expectation among the French electorate, and then utterly demoralize people by taking away any possibility to express their views about French foreign policy at the polls. Whatever the truth may be, and whatever political advantage rivals to President François Mitterrand such as Michel Rocard may hope to reap, the fact is that the genie is out of the bottle. The "Sarajevo" list has proven that the French electorate is in an explosive temper, not just over the economic crisis, but over the moral and political disaster of the present regime.