

The Balkans: 'Bring us poison,' cry the citizens of Bihac

by Katharine Kanter

The events of the week of May 15 in the Balkans—the shelling, the bombing, the strafing of civilians by the Serbian insurgents—might seem to a frightened outsider “incomprehensible madness.” No: There is a responsible cause. Those British and French diplomats, those U.N. officials, who have coolly put into place this killing machine, should keep well in mind that every one of the dead is not a thing, but a human being; every one of the dead has a name, and for every crime by the Serbians, for which these ice-cold diplomats are the instigators and the chief accomplices, they will one day be brought personally to account.

'U.N. Safe Haven' Bihac

Between August and October-November of last year, the Bosnian Army launched a major operation to retake the Bihac pocket and the Grmusko-Srbljanski Plateau; in the course of their counteroffensive in November, the Serbians tore up every clause of the Geneva Convention, raining fragmentation bombs and napalm down upon Bihac. Surging to the Serbians' rescue, the United Nations declared the Bihac pocket off-limits to western journalists, particularly photo-reporters, exactly as they did at Gorazde; however, short-wave broadcasts by the city's mayor got through, though garbled, and unleashed an outcry in western Europe. So the U.N.—i.e., the British and the French—declared Bihac a “U.N. Safe Haven.” How utterly absurd this is, becomes plain when one realizes that the entire Serbian offensive against Bihac had been mounted out of the zone of the Unprofor (U.N. “peacekeeping” forces), i.e., the Serbian-occupied Croatian Krajina.

Since early May, the Serbians have been shelling “Safe Haven” Bihac from Mt. Grmec, the Lohovska Hills, and Mt. Pljesevica. They have mounted artillery, tank, and infantry attacks, which aim to break through the Bosnian Army Fifth Corps defense line to the city of Bihac itself.

A recent report by the London *Times* defense correspondent indicates that the Serbians are now throwing fuel air bombs onto Bihac, like those used in the Persian Gulf war to “clear out” trenches and detonate minefields. These are “home-made” weapons, cast from a rail launcher on a huge, specially built gantry; four 128 mm Russian BM21 rockets are bracketed together and attached to 500-pound aircraft bombs or to a standard fuel-air bomb, the FAB 250, the

whole kept on trajectory by a Sagger anti-tank guided weapon. These weapons are so powerful that they have demolished entire apartment blocks inside the city of Bihac.

Doubtless feeling that these violations of the Geneva Convention are not exciting enough, the U.N. *has been allowing* the Krajina Serbians to halt all convoys which attempt to cross over into Bosnia with food supplies for the Bihac pocket.

According to Mans Nyberg of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, as reported in the Madrid daily *El Mundo*, food supplies in the pocket have dropped so far, that the trapped civilians have implored the U.N. to supply them with *poison* “to put us out of our misery.”

'U.N. Safe Haven' Tuzla

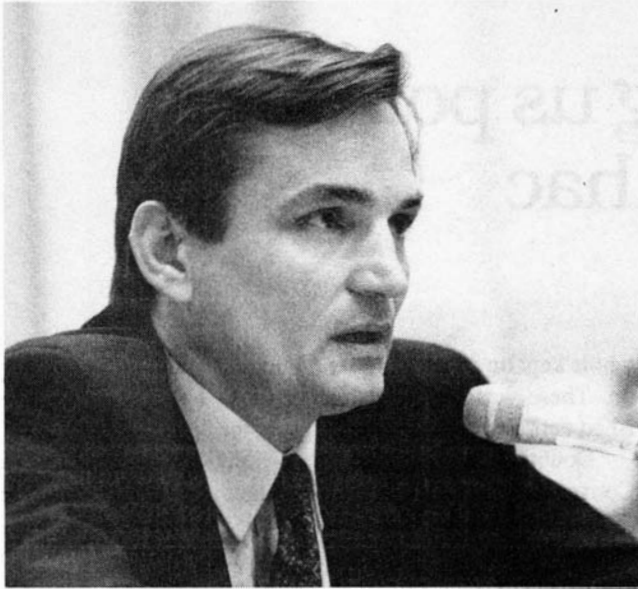
The center of Tuzla, strategically the most important city in Bosnia and the capital of Tuzla province, has been shelled almost constantly since early May. On May 8, the marketplace was shelled and 13 civilians were wounded; on May 9, the city was taken under artillery fire; on May 15, the town center came under heavy shelling again as five projectiles were fired from Mt. Ozren onto the capital's thronged streets. A great number of people were wounded. These Serbian attacks on unarmed civilians, so habitual as to go unnoticed in the western press, were “provoked” by their having to relinquish their grip on the dominant peak on Mt. Majejica to the Bosnian Army Second Corps.

Unprofor has done *nothing* to stop this.

U.N. travel agency for Serbian insurgents

Next on our agenda of the week's fresh crimes of the U.N., whatever happened to the Serbian militiamen fleeing the Croatian offensive to re-take Western Slavonia (U.N. Zone North, in U.N. Newspeak) on May 1-2? These people should have been made prisoners of war and sent back to Serbia. Instead, Unprofor ushered them over the border—into the province of Banja Luka, which is Serbian-occupied Bosnia!

On May 13, Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic told a press conference that his government has “firm proof that members of U.N. Military Observers (UNMO) and U.N. civil police (Uncivpol) *encourage* the Serbians from Croatia to leave Western Slavonia for occupied Bosnia. It is being done without permission of the legal Bosnian authorities who are



Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic: U.N. observers are taking "an active part in committing genocide."

not even consulted. The Serb population is transported by UNCRO; by permission of the self-proclaimed local authorities subordinated to Karadzic, they are accommodated in the houses of the killed or expelled Bosniaks and Croats and other non-Serbs.

"In this way 9,945 Serbians from Slavonia have arrived in Bosnia. If it is the implementing of the scenario, to deliberately change the demographic picture in Bosnia, it represents an active part in committing genocide. That is another proof charging the international community of maintaining the war within Bosnian borders as their primary task" (emphasis added).

'U.N. Save Haven' Sarajevo

Bosnian General Bilajac has been trying to cut off the two main enemy supply routes ringing the capital city, one of which links the Serbian stronghold Pale to their military base at Lukavica, the other leading to the Serbian suburb of Vogosca. Immediately, according to U.N. spokesmen themselves, the Serbians "took over" (read: *were allowed to take over*) a U.N. heavy weapons collection site, sealed it off with mines, and trained the guns on the capital.

On May 16, in the most violent combats since 1993, cannon, tank fire, mortars, heavy machine guns, and anti-air flak, weapons supposedly the object of a 20 km U.N. exclusion zone, were fired into the center of the city from the hills southeast. French Gen. Hervé Gobillard, Unprofor head for Sarajevo, said: "We will not involve ourselves, under any pretext, in activities which might favor one or another faction, and thereby put the lives of our soldiers into danger," and British Gen. Rupert Smith, commanding U.N. forces in Bosnia, spoke to Serbian General Mladic, who "promised"

that he would "try to avoid" civilians and Unprofor soldiers. NATO planes waited two hours before even making overflights over Sarajevo as the bombardments began.

Croatia: accomplice or ally?

What will Croatia do next? In Bonn, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia told Chancellor Helmut Kohl that he would withdraw all Croatian troops from Western Slavonia, the U.N. buffer zone occupied by the Croatian Army, by 8:00 p.m. on May 16; this was also the tenor of his conversation with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd the week before. Kohl and German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel are believed to have stressed to Tudjman, that economic aid and Croatia's "partnership" with the European Union depend on Tudjman "keeping his promises" to the Serbian occupiers. However, according to the London *Independent*, only a "few hundred" Croatian soldiers have actually left Slavonia, 1,200 remaining in what is called "U.N. Sector North." An unknown number of Serbian soldiers are still in the zone. It is also reported that Croatian troops are within 20 km of Knin, the capital of Serbian-occupied Krajina.

On May 13-14, from occupied Eastern Slavonia, the Serbians fired 3,000 tank, howitzer, and mortar missiles upon the Orasje area, the key to the Brcko corridor, and, as the Croatians are now giving logistical support from over the Sava to the Bosnians, the Serbs have been shelling the Croatian town of Zupanja just over the river. Were the Croatians to defy the U.N. and cut the vulnerable Brcko corridor, the Serbians would lose the supply line linking their occupied territories. But will they?

Enemy diplomacy

As the Bosnian Army is increasingly successful and well-armed, and the Croatian Army increasingly restive, enemy diplomacy has been scuttling from pillar to post, demanding a "thorough review" of United Nations policy in the Balkans. Translated from Newspeak, this means the British and the French have a problem: how to keep the war festering indefinitely, so as to tie down Germany and Central Europe, all the while juggling to avoid any decisive move in favor of Bosnia by the United States, and the U.S.-NATO air forces. U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was in Paris, meeting with high U.N. officials and assorted diplomats, and proposing that the "Safe Havens" be "demilitarized" (!); Alain Juppé, the new French prime minister, met with British Foreign Secretary Hurd, to declare that "things cannot remain as they are"; and it is now rumored that the Devon and Dorset Regiments based at Vitez in central Bosnia will replace the French Unprofor troops around Sarajevo, which are deemed "problematic."

Meanwhile, out of gratitude perhaps to their travel agents in the United Nations, Serbian militiamen in the province of Banja Luka blew up two Catholic churches and a convent, killing an elderly monk and a nun.