

Under U.S.-French alliance, NATO gives U.N. the boot

by Edward Spannaus and Mark Burdman

In the days following the July 21 London conference on Bosnia, a number of major developments took place which indicate a new determination and commitment to take decisive action against the Serbian perpetrators of genocide in Bosnia. Among the most significant developments were:

1) The United States Senate passed a bill to lift the arms embargo which has illegally denied the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina its right to self-defense since 1991. This followed the action of the Islamic Conference on July 21, which declared the arms embargo against Bosnia to be illegal and invalid, and which called upon U.N. member-states to provide the means of self-defense to that country.

2) NATO and U.S. leaders compelled United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to back down and to relinquish his veto over the use of air strikes in Bosnia, and forced Boutros-Ghali to accept the NATO decision to use massive and decisive air power against the Bosnian Serbs, should they continue to threaten Gorazde or other U.N.-designated "safe havens" in Bosnia.

3) The special War Crimes Tribunal dealing with the former Yugoslavia issued indictments and arrest warrants for the top leadership of the Bosnian Serbs, including Radovan Karadzic, Gen. Ratko Mladic, and 22 others. They were charged with a variety of war crimes, from murder and rape, to genocide.

The London 'Agreement'

Although the London Conference arrived at an official understanding that any Serb attack on Gorazde would be met with a "substantial and decisive response" involving the use of air power, the divisions within the meeting were immediately apparent. Most revealing was the fact that the British and the United States held separate press conferences to announce the

results. British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind gave the official statement from the conference, in which he stated that there had been strong support for the use of air power, but also "great concern" expressed over it, and he stressed a number of times that "no one wishes to use air power."

A second press conference was given by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary William Perry, and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. John Shalikashvili. In contrast to Rifkind, Christopher explained that any attack on Gorazde would be met with "substantial and decisive air power," that any air campaign would involve "significant attacks on significant targets," and that there will be "no more pin-prick air strikes." General Shalikashvili noted that an air campaign would involve "a wide range of targets throughout a broad zone of operations."

Christopher also stressed that existing command-and-control arrangements for NATO air strikes "will be significantly adjusted." He further stressed that the taking of hostages by Serbs "will no longer be allowed to prevent the implementation of our policies."

The Clinton-Chirac 'Entente'

What made all this possible was the agreement between President William Clinton and French President Jacques Chirac. This new combination began to immediately reverse the years of toleration and appeasement of Serbian war crimes which was set into motion under former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and former U.S. President George Bush, along with active support from the French government under François Mitterrand.

With the new leadership in France, this has all changed. And, as U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche has pointed out, the implications of the Clinton-Chirac agreement against the

British potentially go far beyond Bosnia, and raise the possibility of concerted action toward a reorganization of the world monetary system as well.

In the days leading up to the July 21 London conference, the two leaders were in regular telephone contact, even while Chirac was touring Africa on July 19-23. According to various reports, during one of these communications on July 20, Chirac agreed to the American strategy of massive air strikes against Serbian positions.

On July 25, the French daily *Le Figaro* headlined an article "Chirac-Clinton: Entente Cordiale." The article featured a photograph of the two Presidents, obviously enjoying a discussion together, with the caption: "It is through the Bosnian drama, that the Americans have perceived the first indications of what will be the presidential style of Jacques Chirac." The article stressed that American officials' view of Chirac was, on the whole, favorable, and that "between Jacques Chirac and Bill Clinton, the current has passed"—the latter phrase being more comfortably rendered in American English, "they have hit it off." Chirac's general approach toward policy matters, and "Americanophile" views, are regarded among leading figures in Washington as "a breath of fresh air"; unlike the traditional behavior of most European leaders, he "says exactly what he thinks, with force and firmness."

According to the daily, Chirac and Clinton have achieved the basis of a working relationship, with Clinton promising to combat whatever tendencies there may be toward "isolationism" and abandonment of Europe within the U.S. Congress, and to use his presidential veto against any congressional attempt to slash the U.S. foreign aid bill to pieces. As for Bosnia specifically, the reported American reactions to Chirac's policy are overwhelmingly positive—how "firm" he was when he called the Serbs "terrorists" after they took hostages, how he dressed down Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic on the telephone.

British observers have not failed to notice the new trends in Franco-American relations. In an article entitled "U.S. Clarity Eclipses Britain's Caution," London *Independent* diplomatic editor Michael Sheridan wrote on July 22 that "the United States took a clear lead at yesterday's international conference on Bosnia, by putting forward a set of proposals remarkable for their clarity and even-handed in their effect. By contrast, the speech by [British Prime Minister] John Major opening the proceedings, was notable mainly for its generalities. . . . Rarely have the contrasts between detailed American aspirations and adaptable British pragmatism been laid quite so bare as in yesterday's negotiating positions."

Sheridan added that the proposals by Christopher, for firm and decisive action against the Serbs "came close in tone to statements by France. Mr. Christopher's spokesman, Nicholas Burns, went out of his way to voice 'great admiration' for the ideas and leadership provided, he said, by the French government. Suitably impressed, French ministers decided not to insist on their plan to airlift reinforcements

into Gorazde."

Sheridan's reading, based on the London meeting, was confirmed by an informed Russian strategist, who usually has a reliable reading on the thinking among British elites. He said, "The British didn't expect that the Americans and French could unite in the way they did."

NATO takes control

While officially professing agreement with the United States and France, the British embarked on an immediate campaign to sabotage the London agreement. This was most evident in the behavior of London's stooge, U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, who, along with his flunkey, U.N. Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi, adamantly insisted after the London meeting that they would not give up their "dual key" authority to veto air strikes. U.S. spokesmen were equally insistent that the London meeting had agreed that the "dual key" arrangement must be changed, so that only the U.N. military commanders on the ground—not the civilians—would be involved in the decision-making over air strikes.

This decision was reaffirmed in the NATO planning meetings which followed the London conference. In a remarkable briefing on July 26 at the U.S. State Department, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke reported that Christopher and NATO Secretary General Willy Claes had both spoken to Boutros-Ghali a number of times earlier that day, and that Christopher wanted "to make sure that he [Boutros-Ghali] understands the severity and importance of these decisions, and their absolute irreversibility from the point of view of the United States and our NATO allies."

Holbrooke was asked if this were a *fait accompli* by NATO on the command-and-control arrangements, or whether the United States was asking for Boutros-Ghali's agreement. "We're informing him of the NATO decision," Holbrooke said bluntly. When reporters pressed Holbrooke for clarification, and whether NATO would go ahead with the air-strike plan regardless of what Boutros-Ghali has to say, Holbrooke responded that "it's inconceivable to me that this decision can be misunderstood, and let's wait for Boutros-Ghali to make his formal announcement. He understands what the decision was."

Holbrooke made it clear that the U.N. structure was being shunted aside. "This is the NATO decision," he declared. "The United States and its NATO allies have made this decision; this is the rules of engagement under which we believe we must operate, and that is how it's going to be."

Suggestive of the new arrangement was the air strike which France reportedly conducted against Bosnian Serb headquarters in Pale on July 23. French officials denied it, but their defense minister said that such a raid "would have been an appropriate response to the logic of war chosen by the Serbs." An unnamed senior U.S. official was quoted saying: "Officially, we're appalled that they didn't coordinate it. . . . Unofficially, we think it's wonderful."