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Interview with a warlord **Bosnian Serbs are ready to trade territory for peace, says leader Radovan Karadzic**

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In this exclusive interview with *Global Perspectives*, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic spells out in unprecedented detail his positions in advance of the peace talks that are scheduled to resume tomorrow in Geneva.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: After months of fighting, you claim to hold 70 per cent of the territory in Bosnia. Are you prepared to give up the territory you have seized by force?

RADOVAN KARADZIC: Yes, we are. We are ready to negotiate a substantial reduction of the territories we hold. We are not concerned about territory. Territory is not happiness. We can make a good agreement on territorial concessions with Muslims and Croats.

Though Serbs actually legally own 64 per cent of Bosnian land, we are ready to reduce what we hold to 50 per cent - perhaps less than what was under our control before the outbreak of war on April 5 - if it will enable us to draw very clear and lasting boundaries that demarcate Muslim, Croatian and Serb areas. Enduring peace can only be based on such a clear outline of territories.

I envision that **Sarajevo** will function as two cities in one, both Muslims and Serbs co-existing there. We are ready to make concessions to our neighbors by withdrawing from the core of the city.

GP: What was the point of waging such bloody battles to gain territory when you are so readily willing to give it up?

RK: Because the Muslims didn't want to transform Bosnia into a confederation or into three constituent states for Croats, Serbs and Muslims. They wanted the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina for themselves. The Bosnian Muslims want, ultimately, to dominate, relying on a very high birth rate. They even wanted to move some Turks from Germany to Bosnia to help build their Islamic society. Since such a strategy of domination would be at the expense of Bosnian Serbs, we have resisted it by protecting our own villages.

Of course, in the fighting we have taken some strategic areas that were populated by Muslims, but which we are prepared to give back once we arrive at a formula for lasting peace based upon a constitutional arrangement that is not against the interests of Bosnian Serbs.

You ask why we have been fighting. We have not been fighting to gain territory. We have been fighting for the principle that there will be three autonomous communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order that no one of the three dominates the other, in order to prevent the coalition of two against the third.

Historically, the Croats and Muslims have coalesced against the Serbs. We are fighting to protect ourselves from becoming vulnerable to the same kind of genocide that coalition waged upon us in World War II when 700,000 Serbs were killed. Today, Serbs would be 60 per cent of the population of Bosnia if this genocide had not been committed. We will never again be history's fools. Never.

GP: During the London conference (last month), the historic National Library burned down during fierce fighting. Who is responsible?

RK: Muslims. They burned down the Sarajevo library because they saw it as the heritage of the Austro-Hungarians. We know it was arson and not shelling because the fire came from the lower floor.

GP: And you expect the world to believe that your forces were not firing on **Sarajevo** during the talks, even though the shelling came from known Serb positions?

RK: There was firing by my forces on the periphery of the city, where we are holding positions of our front line against the Muslim forces that are trying to break through. They are trying to improve and consolidate their positions as the peace process gets under way. We are not making an offensive at this time. We have kept the same front lines in **Sarajevo** since the first day of war on April 5.

GP: The Yugoslav prime minister, Milan Panic, argues that most of the mortar and sniper attacks taking place now in Bosnia are the responsibility not of regular forces, but of what he calls "paramilitary hoodlums and terrorists" of all sides. He has further said that you made an agreement with him to eliminate these "hoodlums" among the Bosnian Serbs. Is this true?

RK: In this kind of inter-ethnic and inter-religious war, this war of hatred, many things happen that are not encouraged by any of the organized sides. Everyone is suspicious of what the other sides are intending to do. So, to prevent anything horrible being done to them, they do it to the others first. That is the dynamic. This is the nature of the violence and chaos. It is an eruption of irrationalism. You can't handle it.

I do think that many things have happened from the Muslim side that Mr. Izetbegovic (Muslim president of Bosnia-Herzegovina) has not ordered. For example, I can't believe he ordered his men to cut the throats of the most prominent Serbs in the city of **Sarajevo**.

GP: And hateful Serbs have engaged in the same type of activity?

RK: Yes. And we are investigating these acts. We have already arrested more than 100 people - Serbs.

GP: Is there proof of this? Where are these people?

RK: They are in jail in Biljena. And in Kljuc we have arrested 26, who we learned burned down some Muslim houses in order to frighten the Muslims away. After fighting in the area, they came and scared the people away and then looted the houses before they burned them. Whenever we know about such people who are acting disobediently from army orders, we arrest them. They are not part of the police or army.

GP: Under what conditions will you allow inspections, and then the release of prisoners from the camps? It is well known now that Tadeusz Mazowiecki, representing the U.N. Commission for Human Rights, was not allowed entry to inspect one of the more notorious Serbian camps.

RK: Mr. Mazowiecki did not notify us that he was going there. Then I would have made sure to arrange an escort and access for him. We have too many stubborn people, too many primitive people, who did not know who Mr. Mazowiecki was.

It is difficult to let people wander through a country in the middle of a war. And when people are in my territory I am responsible for their lives. Somebody from my side or the other side could kill them, and I will be blamed.

The situation is highly anarchic and dangerous. Red Cross workers have already been killed in areas under no one's secure control. They passed through our checkpoint and then went on their own toward the Muslim checkpoint. They were killed in-between. And then the world blamed the Serbs, like they blame us for all atrocities.

GP: Are you saying that you will provide for Mazowiecki and other U.N. investigators the right to spontaneous access to the camps?

RK: Yes. But I am very anxious that they get there. I must provide a security escort. I want my people there. If they shell them, then my people will be killed.

I will assist any United Nations request upon demand. Further, I would like to close the camps altogether, but the Muslims are not interested in an exchange of prisoners - all for all. We have already had one exchange with the Croats, and we are now discussing an all-for-all trade with the Croats.

GP: Speaking of providing security escorts, the Yugoslav prime minister has said the two Belgrade airports are open for humanitarian relief to arrive there and be taken to **Sarajevo**. He can guarantee the road, he says, from Belgrade to the border with Bosnia, and says you can guarantee the road from the Bosnian border into **Sarajevo** since your forces control the surrounding territory. Is that correct?

RK: Yes, an absolute guarantee, from the Bosnia border to the centre of **Sarajevo**. It could be an endless convoy of food, clothing, medicine and other supplies to **Sarajevo**.

GP: On the opening day of the London conference, Mr. Izetbegovic made a very specific proposal for a political solution in Bosnia. He said he was committed to setting up a secular state with autonomous self-governing regions of Croats, Muslims and Slavs. A House of Nationalities would be created that would act by consensus, thus giving each group veto power over the others. He said he would also set up a standing commission for five years, composed of three representatives from Bosnia and the rest neutral international observers, to monitor human and minority rights. What is your response?

RK: As you know he already agreed on March 18 to the "cantonization" of Bosnia, on which he has now backed away. We already had such a constitution with so-called consensus on issues, but they violated it. So, we don't trust them.

We have to have our own constituent state. We would rather be in the Yugoslavian federation with other Serbs, but we are ready to stay within Bosnia-Herzegovina. So, let us quit the idea of joining (the unrecognized Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), and we will seek our own self-determination, which everyone should have in the Balkans. Let us settle this issue once and for all.

Let us even discuss changing the borders with Albania in Kosovo. Let us help all people to get where they want, no matter whether we Serbs lose some territory or not. We need to settle this issue of peoples and borders once and for all so that there won't be cause for war again in the Balkans.

But Izetbegovic doesn't want this. He wants all of Bosnia-Herzegovina to be a fundamentalist Muslim state. He is lying when he says he is for a secular state. So, three constituent states on an ethnic basis in a confederation - that is what we want. That is the minimum condition. If I accept anything less, my people will throw me away. What Izetbegovic proposed at the London Conference is out of the question.

GP: Are you saying that the Albanians who make up most of Kosovo, the cradle of Serbia, should be allowed to split off and form a confederation with Albania? That is completely contrary to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's idea of a Greater Serbia. He says "Kosovo is everything."

RK: If we introduce the principle of self-determination for the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, then that same principle must be comprehensive for the whole Balkans. Then there could be a Serbian federation, a Croat federation, Muslims could have confederal ties or be independent. Borders could be corrected with Albania, and then everything would be okay for good. Forever. That would be a just solution.

Kosovo is a part of Serbia, as Milosevic has said. But if we adopt a new approach, then everything would then be open for discussion as far as I am concerned.

GP: Are you receiving any military supplies from Serbia?

RK: Not a single bullet now. We got our weapons from the army when it broke up, and we buy them from dealers.

GP: Would you accept monitors at the Banja Luka air base in the Serbian-held parts of Bosnia, where you are reputedly flying bombing mission against Muslims?

RK: Look, the world thinks that the Serbs have the upper hand militarily. But, together, Croats and Muslims have more weapons, more troops and they are 65 per cent of the population. So, I need my military assets. If

we stop the war, I am ready to give everything up to supervision. For now, we would be finished without that air base.

GP: The leaders of the London conference called for a ceasefire and the surrender of heavy weapons by all sides. One proposal would accomplish that by allowing Serbs to remove their heavy weapons from Bosnia to Yugoslavia and the Croats from the Bosnia territories they hold to Croatia. Do you agree with this approach?

RK: No. These are our weapons. The only balance against the others is that we have these weapons. If we give them up, we are finished. We are only prepared to put heavy weapons under supervision if the other parties do.

GP: There seems to be some question who is control in Yugoslavia - Panic or Milosevic. Who is in control there, and who has the most influence over Serbs in Bosnia?

RK: Well, neither of them has any influence over us. We are independent.

GP: Do you feel bound by any demands that come out of this peace conference since you were not allowed to be officially present?

RK: Well, let me say that the peace process initiated here cannot achieve success because it is too one-sided against the Serbs, as if we are to blame for everything. That is why this approach cannot be a success. There are 11 million Serbs. We are about to stand up and say to the rest of the world, "That is enough. Get your hands out." We want to make our own state, and we don't need you since you are not interested in our survival.

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GRAPHIC: Photo FACE OF WAR: Bosnian Serbs, like this masked irregular, are fighting because Muslims wanted the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Karadzic says. File photo (AP) Radovan Karadzic

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