

emotionally telling Warren Christopher to "get peace now"; and Washington—waiting and worrying . . .

We thought we were ready. But nothing had prepared us for the pressure we encountered within the compound at Wright-Patterson. We estimated the conference would last fifteen to seventeen days; surely it would be impossible to keep three Presidents and hundreds of other people cooped up much longer. But twenty-one days later, on the last morning inside the high wire fence, we were facing defeat, with only twenty minutes left before we closed down the negotiations.

"Dayton." Since November 21, 1995, "Dayton" has entered the language as shorthand for a certain type of diplomacy—the Big Bang approach to negotiations: lock everyone up until they reach agreement. A "Dayton" has been seriously suggested for Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Kashmir, the Mideast, and other festering problems.

Those considering other Daytonos should proceed with caution. It is a high-wire act without a safety net. Much work must precede the plunge into such an all-or-nothing environment. The site must be just right. The goals must be clearly defined. A single host nation must be in firm control, but it is high risk for the host, whose prestige is on the line. The consequences of failure are great. But when the conditions are right, a Dayton can produce dramatic results.

The translators' booths in the two large conference rooms came to symbolize for me the stupidity of the war. Our system had six language channels on the headsets. The first three were for English, French, and Russian.* Channel 4 was for translation into Bosnian, 5 into Croatian, and 6 into Serbian. This puzzled outsiders, since the same language, with minor differences, was spoken throughout the region. The answer came when one looked at the translation booths a few feet from our table. Each participant from the Balkans could choose his or her channel of preference—but one interpreter translated for channels 4, 5, and 6. When I noted this absurdity to Sacirbey, he said that "Serbo-Croatian" no longer existed—or, perhaps, had never existed. Nationalistic leaders were aggressively developing distinctive vocabularies for each ethnic group. Language, which had once helped unify Yugoslavia, was now another vehicle through which people were being driven apart.

Our goals were ambitious: first, to turn the sixty-day cease-fire into a permanent peace and, second, to gain agreement for a multiethnic state. Many observers believed these were impossible goals. Whatever we did, critics said,

* The Germans did not need, or ask for, a German translator. The French insisted on a French one, even though they all spoke excellent English.