

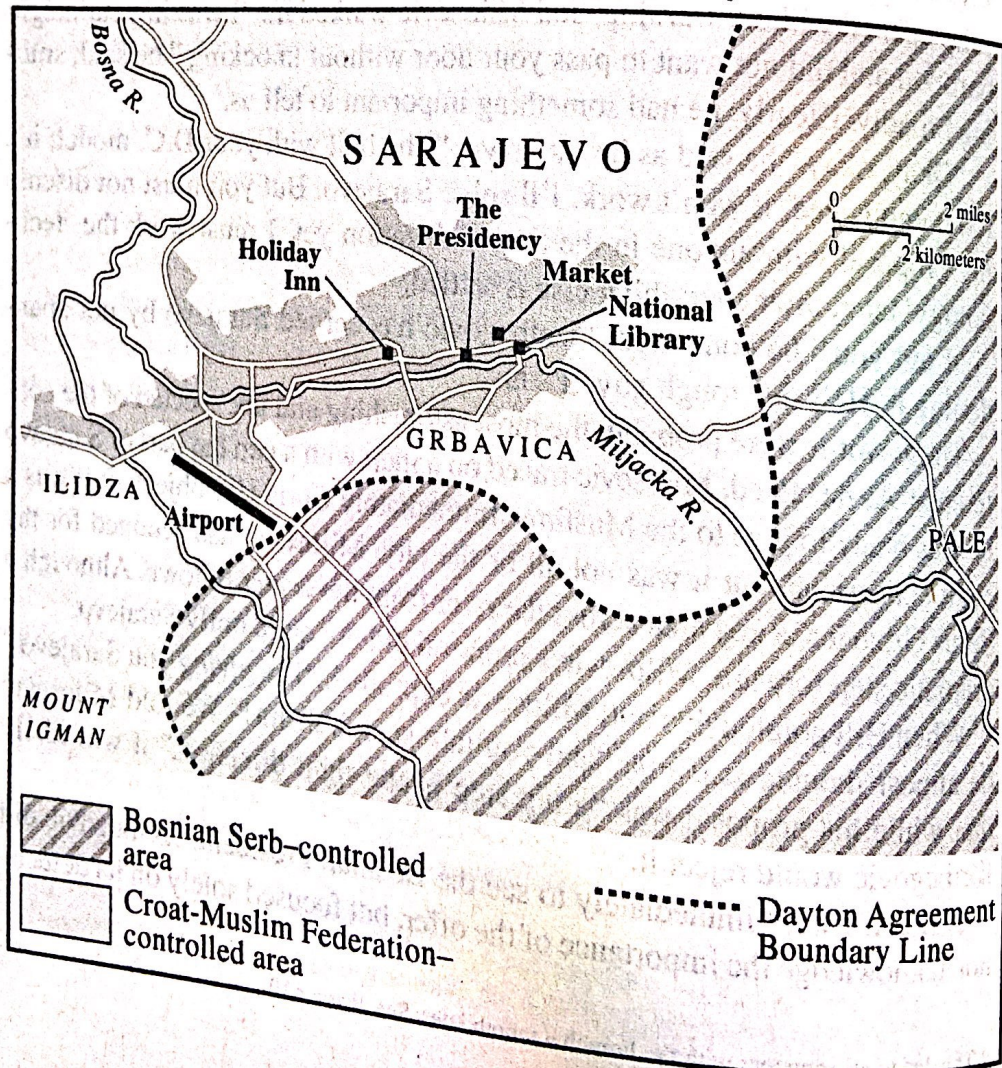
"Sarajevo without Grbavica cannot exist," he said with passion. The area that Milosevic wanted to retain for the Serbs jutted directly into the center of the city and was known to Western journalists as "Sniper Alley." Still, we all recognized that the negotiations over Sarajevo had entered a new phase.

Taking a detailed street map of Sarajevo, Hill, Clark, and I went back to Milosevic's suite. We began examining every road and every terrain feature. Milosevic seemed flexible; Hill predicted after the meeting that if we stuck to our position we would get all of Sarajevo the next day. Feeling suddenly encouraged, we adjourned with our hopes soaring.

Joined by Christopher, we reassembled in my suite to assess what had happened. We had not expected this. We agreed to support Izetbegovic's claim to Grbavica and the hills above the city. Then we sat around debating the possible reasons for Milosevic's astonishing decision.

"Why did Milosevic do this?" I asked. "And can he actually make it happen? Has he decided to abandon the Bosnian Serbs? Can he really force the Bosnian Serbs to give up their parts of the city?"

Reunifying Sarajevo Under Dayton



We never fully understood why Milosevic decided to give Sarajevo to the Muslims. But in retrospect, the best explanation may be that he was fed up with the Bosnian Serbs and had decided to weaken their Pale base by giving away the Serb-controlled parts of Sarajevo. By giving the Federation all of Bosnia's capital, perhaps Milosevic wanted to weaken Karadzic and strengthen the Serbs in other parts of Bosnia, especially Banja Luka.

This explanation was consistent with one of Milosevic's main themes at Dayton: that the Bosnian Serb leadership had become an impediment, even though he had earlier made common cause with them. Milosevic had often talked of strengthening the "intellectuals" and businessmen of Banja Luka in order to weaken Pale; now he seemed to be putting this theory into action.

To further weaken Pale, I proposed that the Dayton agreement include a provision moving the Bosnian Serb capital to Banja Luka. Milosevic seemed interested in this proposal, but, to my surprise, Izetbegovic demurred. Even though he hated the leadership in Pale, he seemed to think he could work with them, especially his old associate from the Bosnian Assembly, Momcilo Krajisnik. Izetbegovic also saw value in keeping the capitals of the two entities close to each other so that Sarajevo remained the only important political center in Bosnia. He may also have feared that if the Bosnian Serb capital moved to Banja Luka, which is closer to Zagreb than Sarajevo, it would accelerate the permanent division of the country and strengthen Tudjman.

Whatever Izetbegovic's reasons for not wanting to close Pale, it was a mistake. The mountain town was solely a wartime capital, established by an indicted war criminal and his henchmen. It was the living symbol—and headquarters—of his organization. We should have pushed Izetbegovic harder to agree to establish the Serb capital at Banja Luka. It would have made a big difference in the effort to implement the Dayton agreements.

DAY NINETEEN: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19

This would be our longest day. Twenty-two hours after it had begun, we would still be at it—without success.

A Bluff Fools No One. Christopher and I agreed to make an all-out effort to complete the talks Sunday. In an attempt to convince the parties we were serious about this deadline, I asked every member of the American delegation to pack his or her bags and place them in the parking lot where the other delegations could see them. After the bags lay outside for several hours, I asked the Air Force to put them on a truck and take them to the airstrip. Rosemarie began to try to collect the payment of bills from the parties—an effort in which she was entirely unsuccessful.

Of all the gambits we tried at Dayton, this proved to be the most pathetic. Everyone saw through our bluff; nobody else made the slightest effort to prepare for departure. Early in the evening, we gave up and brought the bags back to our rooms.

To bring the conference to an end, in fact, would require much more than a theatrical ruse. We needed to tie up the loose ends on a dozen secondary issues, resolve the question of refugee voting, and settle Sarajevo. But each time Christopher met with Izetbegovic, the Bosnian President pointedly brought up Brcko, referring to the unrealistic 1994 Contact Group map with its railroad bridge and tiny underpass.

The Chart Fiasco. How could we convince Izetbegovic that he was now at the decisive moment? Knowing he was under conflicting pressures from his own delegation, we looked for ways to convince him to take the leap for peace. Through Neville-Jones and Blot, we asked Prime Minister Major and President Chirac to call Izetbegovic. Both men did so immediately, telling the Bosnian President that "if this moment is lost, the opportunity might not easily come again." Izetbegovic conceded to Major that they had made progress, but added that he needed more land to make up for the lost towns of Srebrenica and Zepa. In Ankara, Ambassador Grossman also arranged a call between Izetbegovic and Turkish president Suleyman Demirel, the foreign leader whom Izetbegovic probably respected most.

We asked Menzies to compile a list of everything the Bosnians had already achieved in the negotiations—and would lose if the talks did not succeed. Working with the graphics division of Wright-Patterson, Menzies produced two large posters, listing the "gains of Dayton." On Saturday afternoon—at the same time we were arguing over the Serb portions of Sarajevo—Christopher, Menzies, and I took these to Izetbegovic's suite. In large block letters, they listed everything that had been achieved in the negotiations. Reviewing the charts before we showed them to the Bosnians, Christopher laughed and said, "Well, *I'm* impressed, even if Izetbegovic is not," and added that he did not see how anyone could "responsibly walk away from these gains and allow his country to go back to war."

The posters contained one particularly sensitive item. Measuring the territorial concessions that Milosevic had already made, the Defense Mapping Agency team had determined that 55 percent of Bosnia was now conceded to the Federation. This was a negotiated increase of about 5 percent during the first eighteen days at Dayton over the battlefield situation—and left us with something halfway between an opportunity and a dilemma. The opportunity was obvious: a chance to gain more territory for the Federation. But so was the

dilemma: under the 1994 Contact Group plan, all five Contact Group Foreign Ministers and the leaders of all three countries had formally agreed to a 51-49 split of Bosnian territory between the Federation and the Bosnian Serbs.

Were we still bound by 51-49? Given that the Serbs had conquered so much territory through infamous methods, it would have been just for the Federation to control more than 51 percent of the land. Unexpectedly, we had gained 55 percent for Sarajevo. We decided to see if we could retain this higher percentage, since it would significantly strengthen the chance to create a viable country. But we knew that if Milosevic objected we would have little choice but to fall back to the 51-49 formula, given the prior commitments of the United States and the four other nations of the Contact Group. Tony Lake had reaffirmed this as a core American position during his August trip to the European capitals before the start of our shuttle, and it had been included in the September 9 Geneva agreement.

Menzies had placed the dramatic percentage figures in a prominent position on the first poster. We hoped the Bosnians would recognize what a significant achievement it was, and move rapidly to lock it in by finishing the rest of the negotiations. With Sarajevo close to solution, we felt this was possible within hours if we worked fast. But while the Bosnians were fascinated with our charts, they continued to argue over minor issues. Their delay, and what happened next, doomed any chance we might have had to get more than 51 percent for the Federation.

When the meeting was finished, Izetbegovic and Silajdzic asked to keep the charts. Menzies placed them beside the couch, partially concealed. A short time later, Milosevic unexpectedly called on Izetbegovic—in itself an unusual event—to discuss Sarajevo and the need to finish the conference quickly. As the two men talked, Milosevic noticed the top of one of our charts peeking out from behind the couch. On it was written, in bold capital letters: "FEDERATION TERRITORY INCREASED FROM 50% TO 55% DURING DAYTON TALKS."

For the first time, Milosevic realized how far his territorial concessions had gone. Ending the meeting quickly, he walked directly to my room, and entered without warning. I was sitting with Warren Christopher and several of our team. When Milosevic entered, everyone left except Christopher.

"You tricked me," he said angrily. "You didn't tell me that the percentage was no longer 51-49. I asked you but you didn't reply. I saw your charts. How can I trust you?"

At first we could not understand what had happened. Had the Bosnians boasted to Milosevic about the percentage in order to goad him? We had no idea. The truth—that the Bosnians had left the charts partially in view when Milosevic visited them—did not occur to us, and we did not know if it was a deliberate provocation or simply a stupid oversight. (Later, Silajdzic told me

that it was just bad luck that Milosevic showed up without warning and saw the charts.)*

"I can do many things," Milosevic said, "but I cannot give you more than fifty-one percent. This is my bottom line with Republika Srpska. We agreed to this before Dayton."

We pointed out that Milosevic had already accepted territorial changes that exceeded 51 percent. "I didn't know what the percentage was," he replied, "and I can't force Pale to accept a deal for less than forty-nine percent. Please believe me. This is the end of the matter."

Christopher and I glanced at each other. The Secretary of State could not renege on a public commitment if any of the parties insisted on sticking to it. Other parts of the original Contact Group map had been changed "by mutual consent," as called for in the plan, but 51-49 had taken on an almost theological force.

Milosevic had a suggestion as to how to return to 51-49—and it was unacceptable. He asked for a widening of the Posavina Corridor from three miles to ten miles. This was, of course, the same corridor that Izetbegovic continually insisted be reduced to a thirty-meter-wide underpass beneath the railroad bridge to the adjoining city of Brcko. The existing corridor, connecting the Serbs of western Bosnia with Serbia itself, hung like a noose around the Serb neck.

Having repeatedly told Izetbegovic that we could not reduce the width of the corridor, we now rejected Milosevic's demand to widen it. But the issue of the Posavina Corridor and Brcko were still not settled, and would, as we had expected, prove to be the toughest of all issues at Dayton.

The day continued with endless meetings over maps. Clark and the military map experts looked for ways to change the percentage from 55-45 to 51-49 without asking the Federation to give up any "important" land. Since a significant portion of the terrain in Bosnia consisted of sparsely inhabited mountain areas ("worthless land," in Silajdzic's dismissive phrase), there was room for some compromise, but not much. Using their computers, the mapping team could measure the land to one one-hundredth of 1 percent (.01 percent!), an absurdly false precision; the thickness of the map lines themselves amounted to at least 1 percent of the land. But, with both sides now obsessed with this issue, the precise percentage of land each controlled was central.

* In *The Death of Yugoslavia*, Brian Lapping and Laura Silber's superb six-part documentary for the BBC, Silajdzic recounts this incident in detail. He describes it as an accident, and laughs as he recalls how upset both Milosevic and the Americans were. To those involved in it at the time, however, it was no laughing matter.

The most disturbing aspect of this obsession with 51-49 was that it revealed how little each side trusted the political aspects of the Dayton agreements to which they had both agreed. As Izetbegovic once said, a "mountain of corpses" between the two sides prevented trust. The argument over the land was, in effect, a continuation of the war in Dayton, while the political discussions were a tentative effort to build a political framework for a joint future. We were all too aware of the internal contradiction, but there was nothing that could be done about it.

Milosevic and Silajdzic. The long day dragged on. Milosevic, still fuming over our "clever trick" with the percentages, refused to make any further concessions on Sarajevo or settle the final details on Gorazde. After several hours, he gradually regained his composure, and the talks inched forward again. But Milosevic still held out on the land south of the Drina near Gorazde, on the hills to the southwest of Sarajevo, and, most important, on the Grbavica portion of Sarajevo. Shortly before 8:00 P.M., while Milosevic argued with Hill and me, we looked out the window and noticed Silajdzic walking toward Packy's. The two sides had not met face-to-face since Milosevic had walked out of Izetbegovic's suite after seeing the offending poster hours earlier. Running into the parking lot, I grabbed Haris. "You might get what you want on Sarajevo if you meet Milosevic right now," I said, and pulled him into my rooms. Asking the two men to negotiate face-to-face, I left them alone with Chris Hill, our "language officer."

For hours the three men argued, while Christopher, Donilon, Jim Steinberg, and I waited in another room down the hall. Periodically Hill would appear to give us a progress report or get new maps. A careful man not given to overoptimism about the Balkans, which he knew so well, Hill was now relatively upbeat. As we ate sandwiches in Christopher's room, we thought the end might be in sight. Donilon and Burns began discussing with Washington how to arrange the initialing ceremony.

At 10:00 P.M., Tudjman returned from Zagreb to join the final push. Christopher and I met him at the airport and told him that he had to exert direct pressure on both Izetbegovic and Milosevic. He said he would do whatever he could the next morning, but preferred to stay away from the Milosevic-Silajdzic marathon, already in its third hour.

Under Hill's insistent pressure, Milosevic finally gave more ground near Gorazde. At one point, Silajdzic asked for Ustkolina, a small town near Gorazde, primarily because it held the oldest mosque built in Bosnia. Milosevic laughed sardonically. "Oh, Haris," he said, "don't you know that those idiots"—he meant the Bosnian Serbs—"blew it up?"

"But the location is sacred," Silajdzic replied.

"Haris," Milosevic joked, "now you sound like Karadzic." But he yielded, and Ustkolina was Muslim again.

Shortly thereafter, Milosevic agreed to give the Federation a symbolically important strip of land on the southern bank of the Drina. Four days after the napkin diplomacy at the Officers' Club shuttle, Gorazde was settled. We had come a long way from the original U.S. position in July that Gorazde was indefensible and might have to be sacrificed in a negotiation. Gorazde was saved.

The three men shifted back to Sarajevo, drawing lines on the map. Milosevic's lines did not include Grbavica. Silajdzic said that without it, there was no deal; it was an integral part of the capital. Hill drew a line that included Grbavica and said, "This is *our* line, the American line." Suddenly, Milosevic did not object.

Silajdzic demanded land that overlooked the city so that it could never again be used for artillery and mortar attacks on Sarajevo. Part of it contained a Serb cemetery. "Now you want our dead too!" Milosevic exclaimed. But again he relented. Almost without realizing it, the two men had won an undivided Sarajevo.

But, Milosevic said, all his other agreements were contingent on returning to 51-49. Pulling Silajdzic out of his session with Milosevic, Christopher and I told him that we could not hold to the percentages of the posters any longer. This did not surprise Silajdzic, who had always maintained that the quality of the land was more important than its quantity. He agreed to negotiate land readjustments that would get the map back to 51-49.

Shortly after midnight, the three men broke off their talks. Silajdzic, feeling extremely good, went back to his building to consult Izetbegovic and his own map expert.

In the American building, members of our team crowded in the hallway and the small conference room. Stale air and the smell of pizza filled the corridor. In the workrooms, Tom Malinowski, one of Warren Christopher's best speechwriters, worked on two public statements—one for success, the other for failure. I looked at the failure statement, which tried to put a positive face on events, and tossed it into the air. I wrote a new draft that presented failure, if it came, honestly, bluntly, and unapologetically. "To put it simply," the draft ended,

we gave it our best shot. By their failure to agree, the parties have made it very clear that further U.S. efforts to negotiate a settlement would be fruitless. Accordingly, today marks the end of this initiative. . . . The special role we have played in recent months is over. The leaders here today must live with the consequences of their failure.

The Thirty-seven-Minute Peace: The evening was far from over. Milosevic did not leave our building, but instead moved from my suite to the conference room, where he waited, with Christopher, Hill, Clark, Menzies, and myself, for Silajdzic to return. Shortly after 2:00 A.M., Silajdzic returned with his map expert. Huge maps had been set up by Clark.

For two more hours Milosevic and Silajdzic argued, yelled, and drew wide, sweeping lines on the maps. Translation was almost unnecessary—the body language, the hand gestures, the emotions told the story. Silajdzic—on the attack, demanding one concession after another from Milosevic, a railroad station here, a hilltop there—was picking up more territory. At one point the Bosnian map expert pointed out that the water reservoir at Faletici northeast of Sarajevo had been left outside the line of Federation control. When Silajdzic raised this, Milosevic said, “I am not a louse,” and yielded immediately. It was clear: Milosevic wanted an agreement then and there. But he insisted, at all times, to 51–49.

This was not easy, given the concessions Milosevic had already made. More than minor “shaving” of lesser Federation-controlled areas would be necessary. Well after 3:30 A.M., Silajdzic hit upon a solution that retained for the Federation all the key gains of Dayton but returned to the sacred percentage. He outlined a large egg-shaped area on the map south of Highway 5 in western Bosnia, and offered the land to Republika Srpska. This was a mountainous, lightly populated Serb region south of the town of Kljuc that had been taken during the recent Croat offensive—precisely what Silajdzic had meant when he talked of “worthless land.” Because of its shape, Hill dubbed it “the egg,” while Milosevic, thinking it resembled Spain, called it “the Iberian peninsula.” Both men agreed to calibrate its exact size so as to reach 51–49 for the whole country.

Suddenly Milosevic stuck out his hand. Slightly surprised, Silajdzic took it. Except for some details, the deal was done. It was 4:00 A.M. For a moment, we sat silent, too stunned to react. They talked with sudden ease, and, for the first time, joked. Silajdzic seemed euphoric at his negotiating triumph, Milosevic relieved that it was over. Christopher went outside and asked Bob Bradtke, his faithful executive assistant, to fetch a bottle of his favorite California Chardonnay from the supply with which he always traveled. Out of plastic cups, we drank to peace. (Silajdzic, a practicing Muslim, drank a Coke.) An Air Force photographer came in to record the triumphant scene.

After a drink or two Silajdzic went off to get Izetbegovic, who appeared wearing an overcoat over pajamas and looking sleepy and annoyed. He refused a drink, even a soft drink, while he stared at the map without comment. As we drank, I had been studying the map, puzzled. Something was wrong, but at first, I was too tired to see what was it was. Then it struck me: all of