

BOOK FOUR

IMPLEMENTATION

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.

—T. S. ELIOT

Slow Start

(November 21, 1995–February 21, 1996)

In 1884, at the International Meridian Conference in Washington, D.C., representatives from twenty-six countries voted to make . . . the Greenwich meridian the prime meridian of the world. This decision did not sit well with the French, however, who continued to recognize their own Paris Observatory meridian, a little more than two degrees east of Greenwich, as the starting line for another twenty-seven years, until 1911. Even then, they hesitated to refer directly to Greenwich mean time, preferring the locution "Paris Mean Time, retarded by nine minutes twenty-one seconds."

—DAVA SOBEL, *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*

AN HOUR AFTER THE DAYTON INITIALING CEREMONY, Kati and I flew with General Shalikashvili to New York. Leaving Wright-Patterson Air Force Base was like release from a comfortable prison; we slowly rediscovered the outside world. Still, after twenty-one days of isolation, normal life seemed far away. The extraordinary public reaction to the Dayton agreement was immensely gratifying, but in the rush of tasks that needed to be done, there was no time to savor it.

Meeting with the President. The next day, November 22, we met at the White House in an atmosphere that combined relief, pride, and apprehension. Lake's opening quip reflected the tone: "We're in a heap of trouble now—but it's the right kind of trouble." The President, arriving with Gore a few moments later, thanked everyone, and joked, "I was all set for a disappointment."

Asked to begin, I said that the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic was the most critical issue that was not resolved at Dayton. I repeated my view that if the two men, particularly Karadzic, the founder and leader of a still-unrepentant separatist movement, remained at large, full implementation of the agreement

thia McKinney, a first-term Democrat from an overwhelmingly black district in Georgia, who had previously focused on domestic issues and expressed great skepticism about foreign "giveaways," was typical. She told me later, "The trip changed my life. It made me realize that we have to undertake some of the same responsibilities overseas that we need to do at home, and that we must find a way to do both."

Europe: Applause and Shock. Dayton shook the leadership elite of post-Cold War Europe. The Europeans were grateful to the United States for leading the effort that finally ended the war in Bosnia, but some European officials were embarrassed that American involvement had been necessary. Jacques Poos's 1991 assertion that Europe's "hour had dawned" lay in history's dustbin, alongside James Baker's view that we had no dog in that fight.

"One cannot call it an American peace," French Foreign Minister de Charette told the press, "even if President Clinton and the Americans have tried to pull the blanket over to their side. The fact is that the Americans looked at this affair in ex-Yugoslavia from a great distance for nearly four years and basically blocked the progression of things." But de Charette also acknowledged that "Europe as such was not present, and this, it is true, was a failure of the European Union." Prime Minister Alain Juppé, after praising the Dayton agreement, could not resist adding, "Of course, it resembles like a twin the European plan we presented eighteen months ago"—when he was Foreign Minister. Agence France-Presse reported that many European diplomats were "left smarting" at Dayton. In an article clearly inspired by someone at the French Foreign Ministry, *Le Figaro* said that "Richard Holbrooke, the American mediator, did not leave his European colleagues with good memories from the air base at Dayton." They quoted an unnamed French diplomat as saying, "He flatters, he lies, he humiliates: he is a sort of brutal and schizophrenic Mazarin."* President Chirac's national security assistant, Jean-David Levitte, called to apologize for this comment, saying it did not represent the views of his boss. I replied that such minidramas were inevitable given the pressures and frustrations we faced at Dayton and were inconsequential considering that the war was over.

With two weeks remaining before the formal signing of the agreement in Paris, Karadzic raised temperatures again in the region. Although he had signed the agreement under Milosevic's pressure, he announced that Sarajevo would "bleed for decades" unless we changed the Dayton terms. In response, we said that we would not change the agreement. Defending the most prob-

* Cardinal Jules Mazarin, a famously cunning and powerful seventeenth-century prelate, succeeded Cardinal Richelieu as chief minister to Louis XIII.

lematic part of American policy, Perry predicted that "one year will be sufficient to break the cycle of violence in Bosnia." Perry broke the year down into two phases, four to six months to enforce a truce and disarmament, and another six months to create a secure environment. As it turned out, he was overly pessimistic on the first task, and overly optimistic on the second.

There was much work left before the signing ceremony. NATO had to send sixty thousand troops to Bosnia—the largest troop movement in Western Europe since World War II—and deploy thousands more off the Adriatic coast and at a forward logistics base in Hungary. On the civilian side, a series of high-level conferences were jammed into the two weeks immediately preceding the Paris ceremony. First came the annual NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels on December 5 and 6, which focused heavily on Bosnia. One day later, the scene shifted to Budapest for the annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE, who had to set up the machinery to oversee the elections in Bosnia as called for in the Dayton Peace Agreement. On December 8, the British convened a high-level "Implementation Conference" in London to discuss how to handle the nonmilitary parts of Dayton. Warren Christopher and John Kornblum attended the first two conferences, while Strobe Talbott and Bob Gallucci led the American team to London and Budapest. Meanwhile, I reassembled the negotiating team and returned to the Balkans to pin down the final details for the Paris ceremonies.

This blizzard of diffused activity demonstrated the key difference between the negotiations and the phase that was beginning. The previous fourteen weeks had been highly focused. Now a wide-ranging effort, involving thousands of civilian and military personnel from the United States and other countries, was about to begin. Unfortunately, we had created a structure for implementing Dayton in which responsibility and authority would rest with no single individual or institution. Although Bosnia would play host to fewer agencies than it had during the U.N. days, too many still remained in the process, including NATO, the U.N. and the UNHCR, the OSCE, the E.U., the World Bank, the IMF—and an organization with no precedent, the Office of the High Representative, headed by Carl Bildt.

"Foreign Forces and Elements." When our team met Izetbegovic in Sarajevo on December 8, he was animated and jovial. But his mood darkened when we pressed him on the presence of "foreign forces and elements" in the Muslim portion of Bosnia. These were the Iranians and mujahideen who had been helping the Bosnian Muslims for the previous three years. American intelligence had long known of their existence—they were prominently mentioned, in fact, in my January 1993 memorandum to the incoming Administration—but during the war Washington had not made an issue of their

presence since they were helping the otherwise isolated Bosnians to survive. The Dayton agreement required their complete withdrawal within thirty days after the arrival of IFOR, scheduled for December 20. I told Izetbegovic we would withhold our support for the Equip and Train program unless the Iranians and the mujahideen left. The press, aware of their presence, was running stories with headlines that particularly alarmed Congress (*The Washington Post*, November 30: "Foreign Muslims Fighting in Bosnia Considered 'Threat' to U.S. Troops"; *The New York Times*, December 10: "What's Iran Doing in Bosnia Anyway?"). With NATO forces about to arrive in Bosnia, we could not tolerate the continued presence of these people in Bosnia, especially since some had ties to groups in the Middle East that had committed terrorist acts against American troops.

Extremely uncomfortable with this subject, Izetbegovic pledged that the foreign elements would leave within the Dayton timetable "if there is peace." This was only the first of many conversations we would have on this troublesome issue.

In Pale, Karadzic was still giving inflammatory interviews, to our intense annoyance. On December 2, I wrote Milosevic an angry letter demanding that he get the Bosnian Serbs under control. After reading the letter, Milosevic told Rudy Perina that he had been meeting with Bosnian Serb leaders all week, pressing them to "support" Dayton. Six days later, when we met with Milosevic, he told us confidently that he was succeeding. But on the future of Karadzic and Mladic, Milosevic remained adamant; he could not, and would not, deliver the two men to an international tribunal.

I was concerned that we would not get off to a fast enough start. "Everything depends on a vigorous implementation by IFOR *from the first day*," I called Christopher at the end of the trip. "A slow start would be a mistake."

One day before the Paris ceremony, under pressure from the White House, Congress voted on the deployments. In the Senate, with crucial support from Senator Dole, the Administration won a surprisingly easy 69-to-30 victory. In the House, Gingrich's odd approach produced a 287-to-141 vote to oppose the Administration's policy while "supporting" the troops. Coupled with defeats in each house for proposals to cut off funds for the mission, it was enough for Mike McCurry to claim victory. "This is probably the strongest statement of support they could possibly make," he said. "Having voted overwhelmingly not to shut off funding is, in a sense, supporting the President's judgment."

Paris. By the time of the vote, the negotiating team was already in Paris. The day before the ceremonies, in the midst of a gigantic strike of transit workers that paralyzed Paris, I met Foreign Minister de Charette alone to discuss the

unresolved issue of whether an American or a European would run the OSCE election unit in Bosnia.

The meeting quickly turned into a general discussion of the relationship between our two countries. I observed that no nation had done more in Bosnia than France. President Chirac's personal intervention with President Clinton during his June trip to Washington had been vital in focusing the Administration. Success in the future depended critically on close French-American cooperation, especially since the French military would be responsible for the Sarajevo Sector, as it had been during the war. Finally, I reminded de Charette that we had kept our promise to have the formal signing ceremony in Paris.

We had agreed to let Europeans head every civilian implementation institution in Bosnia, I said. But there was one exception: we would not yield on the OSCE election unit. The reason was simple: the final wording at Dayton—ambiguous that we wanted to ensure a maximalist approach. This required someone of our own choosing.

He and President Chirac, de Charette said, were equally adamant that this position go to a Frenchman. These elections would take place in Europe, and they required a European to head the OSCE team. We went back and forth for a while. I ended the discussion by noting that when President Clinton arrived in the morning, he would take the matter up directly with President Chirac—and he would not yield.

On the morning of December 14, President Clinton and his team arrived in Paris for the signing of the peace agreement. He met in the dining room of the Ambassador's residence with the three Balkan Presidents prior to the formal ceremonies at the Élysée Palace. Two weeks earlier he had made a spectacularly successful trip to both Ireland and Northern Ireland; now he made an eloquent comparison between Bosnia and Ireland. After fifteen months of cease-fire in Ireland, he said, "it is unthinkable for the people to go backward. The whole situation has changed. You need to do the same."

After the meeting, we eased the three Presidents into separate parts of the room, and President Clinton moved among them, spending a few minutes with each. The President told Tudjman that we would send Jacques Klein, a career Foreign Service officer who was also a retired Air Force Reserve general, to eastern Slavonia to oversee the transition of the area to Croatia. With Izetbegovic, the President focused on the dangers posed to the NATO troops by the Iranians and the mujahideen. "If any action is taken against our troops," he said, "it could shatter the whole venture and jeopardize our ability to equip and train your forces. I want to do what I promised, but this could undermine my commitment." Izetbegovic told the President that the bulk of such personnel "had already left," a statement we knew not to be true.

Finally came the President's first discussion with Milosevic. The White House had taken care to ensure that there would be no photographs of the encounter. Still, this was a meeting Milosevic had long wanted; it put him on a plane with other world leaders after years of isolation. "I know this agreement would not have been possible without you," President Clinton said, cool and slightly distant. "You made Dayton possible. Now you must help make it work."

Milosevic said that the key to peace lay in strict implementation of the Dayton agreements. Then he requested full normalization of U.S.-Yugoslav (i.e., Serbian) relations. We swiftly ended the discussion.

Ceremony. Minutes later we were at the Élysée Palace, the home of the President of France, for the formal signing ceremony. First, however, President Chirac wanted to see President Clinton alone. As we waited outside their private meeting room, de Charette approached Warren Christopher and me. "Our President has decided to give you Americans the OSCE election position," he said dryly. "We have our doubts it will work. I hope this is satisfactory to you."

We walked to the ballroom of the Élysée Palace, where we were led to assigned seats facing a long table at which sat the three Balkan Presidents. Behind them stood President Chirac, President Clinton, Chancellor Kohl, Prime Minister Major, and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, filling in for the ailing Boris Yeltsin. One by one the leaders signed, as either principals or witnesses. The Presidents and Prime Ministers spoke, as did Carl Bildt and, oddly, a man whose actions had contributed so little to the ending of the war, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

In a strange, almost touching footnote to its sense of injured pride, the French Foreign Ministry called the Dayton Peace Agreement the "Treaty of the Élysée," and asked the speakers to omit any references to Dayton in their remarks. In addition, it seated Tony Lake, Sandy Berger, General Clark, and me near the back of the room, behind many officials and guests who had played no role in the negotiations. This was inconsequential (and Levitte apologized for it later), and if several newspapers had not noted it the next day, it would not be worthy of recording. I did not judge these sad actions by one or two *fonctionnaires* as representative of the country in which I had lived as a teenager, which had influenced me so much, and for which I had such affection. By wielding the ephemeral power of protocol with such a heavy hand, a few Foreign Office bureaucrats only trivialized their country's important contributions to achieving peace in Bosnia.

After the ceremony, we all moved on to the Quai d'Orsay, where Chirac hosted a large banquet. At the end of the meal, the French president pulled me aside for a moment. "*Mon cher* Holbrooke," he said, in great good humor,

"you have won your point on the elections, but you will see that it is inappropriate for any American, even any European, to conduct these elections in such a place as Bosnia." I said I hoped events would prove him wrong. At that moment, Milosevic came up to us and, picking up on the subject, told Chirac that he would make the elections work.

Once again the scene became somewhat surreal. Smoking a cigar, Milosevic sought out President Clinton, with whom he engaged in small talk. Milosevic clearly relished the moment; as Pardew told Bill Perry later, "the Serbian President was last seen in the magnificent hall of the Quai d'Orsay puffing on a cigar half the size of a fence post while making one last—but futile—effort to charm the U.S. President."

We flew home on Air Force One, exhausted but awed by what we had witnessed. Despite the minor irritations, the event had been successful in giving the Dayton Agreement the aura that came with a formal ceremony, witnessed by five of the world's most powerful leaders. It was entirely appropriate that it was formally signed in Europe, the continent on which the war had been fought.

The President was in a good mood as we flew home. He came back to the second cabin to ask Clark, Kerrick, and me how we thought implementation would proceed. "We will have far fewer casualties than the public and the Congress expect," I said. The President seemed skeptical; after all, he had heard ominous scenarios from the Pentagon. Clark and Kerrick pointed out that official estimates had to be cautious. But none of us could have imagined just how low the casualty rate actually would be—*zero* American forces killed or wounded from hostile action in the first three years after Dayton.

There was a more difficult discussion I had to have with the President, and about an hour out of Paris I sat down alone with him in his office near the front of the plane.

"Mr. President, the time has come for me to make a tough decision," I began, somewhat stiffly. "I want to ask your support and understanding for my request to leave the government early next year." Before leaving Germany, I told him, I had promised Kati—and told Christopher and Talbott—that, since she could not move to Washington because of her children, I would return to New York within a limited period of time. This had already been extended because of the negotiations, but the time had come.

The President was gracious and compassionate. "Family is terribly important," he said, and we talked about the strains that public service puts on families. This was one of the most difficult decisions of my life—a choice between a job to which I was fully dedicated and a personal commitment that was precious to me, and I was touched by the President's support. He asked

me to stay on as long as possible to get implementation headed in the right direction, and requested that I remain available for special assignments in the future.

For Deploys. On December 16, General Joulwan issued the order to begin moving NATO and other forces to Bosnia. It was the first such troop-deployment order since NATO had been formed in 1949.* Most of the U.N. troops already in Bosnia repainted their vehicles from white to a more military-looking olive green, traded in light weapons for heavier ones, and were reassigned to IFOR, the Implementation Force.

American journalists flooded Bosnia to cover the arrival of U.S. troops, led by two of the three network anchors, Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather. Modern journalism requires that if such stars go out on a story, the story has to be good—that is, dramatic. But the only story was the bad weather, which delayed the crossing of the Sava River for several days. Unable to show any tension or conflict between the arriving American forces and the local population, television exaggerated the dangers facing the troops, and covered the arrival in a sort of retro-Vietnam style that misled the American public as to the dangers the troops faced.

Attention would shift away from Bosnia fairly soon, when it became apparent that IFOR was having an easy, untroubled entry. Of course, *this* was the real story, and it was important; there was to be no repetition of the U.N.'s dreadful experience.

A Slow Start for the Civilians. The same was not true on the civilian side. At first, Carl Bildt, now the High Representative, had so little money and support that he was forced to operate without an office or telephones, and used his personal cellular telephone as his primary means of communication. After appeals to the European Union, he received enough funding to open his offices in Sarajevo, where he presided like an elegant squatter over a building filled with wrecked rooms, broken toilets, shattered windows, and almost no staff.

This lag in civilian implementation troubled us enormously, although we shared in the blame for it. While the military, sixty thousand strong, met every early deadline, the civilian side, functioning out of Carl Bildt's cellular telephone, met almost none, and fell steadily behind schedule. For this Bildt was personally criticized, but the fault was more in the structures we had imposed on him, particularly the failure to give him sufficient funding or stronger backing from IFOR.

Furthermore, with a weak police advisory effort, Bildt had no enforcement capability for his task. Now the full consequences of the absurd position taken

* Forces normally assigned to NATO were reassigned for use in the 1991 war against Iraq, but Desert Storm was not a NATO operation.

by NATO—opposing a police force with enforcement capability while itself refusing the task—began to come home to roost.

To say that I was concerned would be an understatement. Having announced my early departure, I agreed to a one-month delay at the request of Christopher to help address the mounting problems. I realized later that I should have stayed longer, but by then we were locked into a firm departure schedule.

The President Visits Bosnia. The President wanted to visit the troops as soon as possible, and scheduled a trip for mid-January. The trip was unusually difficult, posing, as one White House official said publicly, “more logistical, security, and weather variables” than they had ever encountered before. I had hoped that the President would be able to visit Sarajevo, but the risks were deemed too great by those responsible for presidential security, so it was decided that the only stop in Bosnia would be the American military base at Tuzla.

On Friday afternoon, January 12, we flew to the American air base at Aviano, Italy, landing before dawn. As the President spoke to American soldiers and their families, bad weather reports poured in from the Balkans, delaying our departure. After two hours on the ground in Italy, we piled into a C-17, a modern, high-performance military cargo plane, for the flight to Tuzla. Four parallel rows of plastic seats facing each other down the middle of the plane created an unusually egalitarian arrangement: the President, his top advisors, and a bipartisan congressional delegation sat almost at random next to journalists, camera crews, enlisted men and women, and a cargo of food for the troops.

With the weather playing to stereotype, we circled over the landing strip at Tuzla for almost an hour. Finally we landed at the American staging area in Taszar, Hungary, where six thousand American troops had established a forward logistics base for Bosnia. We had planned a brief stop at Taszar later in the day, but we arrived almost seven hours ahead of schedule. Moving fast, the American military took the President to a large tent, where he spoke to American troops while we waited for the weather in Bosnia to clear. I wandered around the base, marveling at how quickly the U.S. military could re-create a special universe and culture almost overnight in any corner of the world. The ankle-deep mud, the wooden pathways, the signs stressing communications security and safety, the individual unit insignias, the small PX, the troops, slightly uncertain of what they were doing in Hungary but ready to carry out their mission—all reminded me vaguely of a war thirty years earlier on the other side of the world. But there were also noticeable differences from Vietnam: most markedly the presence of so many women in uniform, and the cleaner, tighter look of the troops.

Early in the Administration, the President had had well-publicized difficulties dealing with the military because of questions over why he had not served in Vietnam, but by 1996 these were a fading memory. A generation of soldiers who were born after the war in Vietnam ended looked at Bill Clinton as *their* President. They seemed pleased he had come to see them, and he was at ease as he chatted with them. The military's greeting of the President, it seemed to me, was genuinely enthusiastic, and the troops filled the tented area with a war whoop—it sounded like they were grunting "Hoo-aa!"—that shook the ground.

Eventually Hungarian President Arpad Goncz, Prime Minister Gyula Horn, Foreign Minister Lazlo Kovacs, and Ambassador Donald Blinken arrived in two small planes. In the chaos and the excitement of President Clinton's presence, no one met the Hungarian officials, arriving on their own soil, except me and, by chance, Dan Rather, covering the trip for CBS. We squeezed the Hungarians and Ambassador Blinken into some mud-caked military vehicles and sped off to meet President Clinton, driving past a row of broken-down MiG fighter planes, a relic of the Cold War. The presence of six thousand American troops on Hungarian soil only four years after the end of the Cold War—and forty years after the 1956 Soviet invasion—was in itself a remarkable symbol of the transformation of Europe. The Hungarians had one message for President Clinton: that they were ready for NATO membership and that the staging area at Tazsar was part of that goal. "Stay as long as you like," they said. "Turn this into a permanent NATO installation—and let us join the West."

The weather at Tuzla was clearing, but by the time we landed, just before 3:00 P.M., daylight was fast disappearing, and the Secret Service put an absolute time limit on our stay. A trip originally scheduled for eight hours was now down to less than three; the schedule collapsed into a makeshift set of quick meetings. The President, dressed in a brown leather bomber jacket and khakis, addressed the troops, who had waited for over two hours outside. Under slate-gray skies, as Apache attack helicopters flew overhead and Secret Service sharpshooters followed his every move, he called the troops "warriors for peace" who had the support and prayers of the American people, and gave promotions to five enlisted men.

After the speech and a meeting with senior military officers, we had originally scheduled three important meetings: first, with President Izetbegovic and members of his government; then, with representatives of the leading nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia; and finally, with civic and religious leaders of Bosnia. The last meeting, planned at my request, was designed to stimulate the leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities to work for reconciliation. The religious leaders of the region had done great damage since 1991, stirring up ancient but long-submerged desires for

revenge among their followers. This meeting appealed to President Clinton's sense of the importance of religious leaders for good and bad, derived from his own Southern Baptist background. But with the schedule in disarray, we had to reduce the meeting with Izetbegovic to ten minutes, and combine the last two sessions, turning the plan into a shambles. The President entered a small, overheated room crowded with a diverse group: Catholic priests (including Vinko Cardinal Puljic), Orthodox prelates (led by the Metropolitan Nikolaj), Muslim mullahs, the Muslim and Serb mayors of Sarajevo, Jewish community leaders, Americans and Europeans representing a dozen humanitarian organizations, journalists, and security personnel—and three widows who had lost their husbands during the war. As everyone else yelled and pushed, the President calmly walked through the room, greeting almost everyone individually. Then, as he spoke movingly about the need for religious reconciliation, Harold Ickes, the White House Deputy Chief of Staff, pulled me aside and said that the Secret Service insisted that we leave within five minutes. As the astonished and disappointed Bosnians watched, I almost yanked the President out of the room. Our ambitious game plan to use the trip to begin a multiethnic dialogue had gone down the drain with the weather.

As we were leaving, an American colonel handed me a small plastic bag with something inside it. "A Bosnian soldier found this near the wreckage on Mount Igman and turned it in to the American Embassy," he said. "It's Nelson Drew's Air Force Academy class ring. Would you deliver it to Mrs. Drew?" Sandy Drew has carried it with her ever since.

Another Shuttle—and Problems. A week later, on January 18, our team was back in Sarajevo. While most people were saying that implementation had just begun, I was acutely conscious of a different equation: the IFOR year was already one twelfth over, and nothing had been accomplished on the political front.

Still, the trip from the airport into Sarajevo was exhilarating. For the first time we drove through Serb-controlled areas of the city, cutting fifteen minutes off the trip and using roads that had been closed for years. The city was showing more signs of recovery; in a particularly bold move, one merchant had opened a store with a large plate-glass window.

Our meeting with Admiral Leighton Smith, on the other hand, did not go well. He had been in charge of the NATO air strikes in August and September, and this gave him enormous credibility, especially with the Bosnian Serbs. Smith was also the beneficiary of a skillful public relations effort that cast him as the savior of Bosnia. In a long profile, *Newsweek* had called him "a complex warrior and civilizer, a latter-day George C. Marshall." This was quite a

journalistic stretch, given the fact that Smith considered the civilian aspects of the task beneath him and not his job—quite the opposite of what General Marshall stood for.

After a distinguished thirty-three-year Navy career, including almost three hundred combat missions in Vietnam, Smith was well qualified for his original posts as commander of NATO's southern forces and Commander in Chief of all U.S. naval forces in Europe. But he was the wrong man for his additional assignment as IFOR commander, which was the result of two bureaucratic compromises, one with the French, the other within the American military. General Joulwan rightly wanted the sixty thousand IFOR soldiers to have as their commanding officer an Army general trained in the use of ground forces. But Paris insisted that if Joulwan named a separate Bosnia commander, it would have to be a Frenchman. This was politically impossible for the United States; thus, the French objections left only one way to preserve an American chain of command—to give the job to Admiral Smith, who joked that he was now known as "General" Smith.*

Smith treated us like VIP tourists visiting Sarajevo for the first time, offering us a canned briefing full of military charts and vague "mission statements." Close to thirty of his multinational staff sat behind us, saying nothing. On the military goals of Dayton, he was fine; his plans for separating the forces along the line we had drawn in Dayton and protecting his forces were first-rate. But he was hostile to any suggestion that IFOR help implement any nonmilitary portion of the agreement. This, he said repeatedly, was not his job.

Based on Shalikashvili's statements at White House meetings, Christopher and I had assumed that the IFOR commander would use his *authority* to do substantially more than he was *obligated* to do. The meeting with Smith shattered that hope. Smith and his British deputy, General Michael Walker, made clear that they intended to take a minimalist approach to all aspects of implementation other than force protection. Smith signaled this in his first extensive public statement to the Bosnian people, during a live call-in program on Pale Television—an odd choice for his first local media appearance. During the program, he answered a question in a manner that dangerously narrowed his own authority. He later told *Newsweek* about it with a curious pride:

One of the questions I was asked was, "Admiral, is it true that IFOR is going to arrest Serbs in the Serb suburbs of Sarajevo?" I said, "Absolutely not, *I don't have the authority to arrest anybody.*" [Emphasis added.]

This was an inaccurate way to describe IFOR's mandate. It was true IFOR was not supposed to make routine arrests of ordinary citizens. But IFOR had

* Joulwan finally got the command structure that he wanted—the right one—in 1997, when a four-star Army general took over the Bosnia command.

the authority to arrest indicted war criminals, and could also detain anyone who posed a threat to its forces. Knowing what the question meant, Smith had sent an unfortunate signal of reassurance to Karadzic—over his own network.

An hour after our meeting with Smith, we met Izetbegovic and asked him to urge the Serbs who still lived in Sarajevo to stay after the city was unified under Muslim control on March 19. Izetbegovic said he would make the statement, but stressed that it could apply only to those Serbs who had lived in Sarajevo before the war, and not those who had seized Muslim apartments after April 1992, often with a sniper or soldier as a live-in member of the family. Within two months, this issue—the unification of Sarajevo—would emerge as the first true post-Dayton crisis, and the international community would fail it.*

I returned to Washington to warn Christopher and his colleagues again that the civilian effort was already dangerously behind schedule. Christopher talked to Lake and Perry. But bureaucratic inertia and the resistance of the military prevented any serious effort to change the behavior of IFOR. Lake was especially wary of pressuring IFOR, arguing in public and private against anything that suggested that the military should engage in “nation building,” a phrase that had been transformed since the sixties from a noble goal to a phrase meaning “mission creep.”

Ron Brown. On January 31, I made a farewell call on Ron Brown, the Secretary of Commerce, who had given me exceptional support in Germany and Washington. In addition to thanking him, I asked him to undertake an important mission to Bosnia. Brown had been exceptionally effective in strengthening American exports and supporting business, and I thought his imagination and drive could give a huge boost to the economic reconstruction effort, one of the key long-term tests of our policy. Brown enthusiastically said he could lead a high-level trade delegation to Bosnia in March or April. He asked only that I get Warren Christopher to support the trip with the White House, which I assured him I would do.

Our friendship, like many in Washington, was political and professional, not personal, but I truly liked Ron Brown. He was then involved in several well-publicized investigations into his personal financial affairs, but of these I knew nothing. What I saw was a superb Cabinet member who had made a significant contribution to the resurgence of the American economy. Now he had agreed to launch an essential part of our Bosnia policy. I thanked him for his willingness to make the trip, added that perhaps I might travel with him as a private citizen, and said farewell. I would never see him again. Nine weeks

* See chapter 20.

later, on April 3, his plane, which also carried several other friends and associates, including Assistant Secretary of Commerce Charles Meissner, crashed into a mountain trying to land at Dubrovnik, on the Croatian coast, in a driving rainstorm. Thirty-five people died.

Jacques Chirac. On February 1, President Chirac visited Washington. The mood was strikingly different from his first trip in June 1995, when his blunt warnings had contributed to the re-evaluation of American policy. Now the agenda could focus on other issues, especially bringing new nations into NATO, the Administration's next big policy move in Europe.

In a moving and thoughtful gesture, Chirac held a ceremony at Blair House on February 1 to present the widows of Bob Frasure, Joe Kruzal, and Nelson Drew with the French Medal of Honor. What moved us most was the openness of Chirac's emotions. Standing next to Katharina Frasure as he gave her Bob's medal, I could see a large tear running down the cheek of the President of France.

The Last—and Longest—Trip. This was Warren Christopher's first trip to the region, and my last as a government official. At first, unlike for previous trips, there was no specific objective—only to say good-bye and bring Christopher and John Kornblum, who had been selected as my successor, up to speed. But by the time it ended, seventeen days later, it had become my longest trip, and it ended with a hastily planned Balkan summit in Rome.

We left Andrews Air Force Base on the Secretary's big jet on the morning of February 2, and met with Tudjman late that night in Zagreb. The next morning, after a briefing by Admiral Smith in Tuzla, we flew to Sarajevo. Christopher and his staff were fascinated to see the city they had read about for three years but never visited. Though rebuilding was under way and most of the barricades and wrecked vehicles had been removed, the sight of so much damage stunned them. To his pleasure, Christopher was greeted with cheers and applause when he ventured on a short walk. The next day, after lunch with Milosevic, Christopher headed toward the Mideast, and I took a commercial flight to Switzerland to attend the annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos. After this, I hoped to launch our diplomatic initiative on Cyprus, accompanied by our Presidential Special Envoy for Cyprus, Richard Beattie, who would carry on the negotiation.*

The Davos conference was a strange affair. Several thousand people, most of them wealthy businessmen, milled around in groups, attending meetings, setting up meetings, skiing, or socializing. The press was everywhere. So were

* Beattie, a senior partner at a New York law firm, was appointed under government regulations that allow private citizens to serve on a part-time basis. In June 1997, he became a senior advisor to Secretary Albright for the reorganization of the State Department, and I became the envoy for Cyprus.

Russians and other leaders from the former Soviet Union, who set up shop in one of the many hotels and filled the lobby with the stench of cigarettes and spilled alcohol. The State Department set up a series of high-level meetings for me with leaders from Europe and Asia.

When I returned to my room there was an urgent message from Tom Donilon, who was in Syria with Christopher. "The Secretary has become increasingly concerned about Bosnia since his trip," Tom began. "He would like to take advantage of your last few days in government to ask you to return to the region, assemble the three Presidents, and hold a short follow-up summit, perhaps in Rome. He will join you."

"While Europe Slept . . ." There was one other event of note at Davos. During a meeting I thought was off the record—but nothing is off the record at Davos—I was asked why it took the Americans to solve "another European problem"—a reference to a recent American diplomatic effort that had averted a small war between Greece and Turkey over Imia/Kardak, a tiny islet off the Turkish coast inhabited only by sheep. My answer was honest but undiplomatic. "While President Clinton and our team were on the phone with Athens and Ankara, the Europeans were literally sleeping through the night," I said. "You have to wonder why Europe does not seem capable of taking decisive action in its own theater."

These remarks were picked up by *The Washington Post's* chief European correspondent, William Drozdiak, who used them as a metaphor for the confusion and drift that seemed to have settled over the European Union since the end of the Cold War. Although several European commentators had written similar assessments of Europe's political paralysis, Drozdiak's article kicked up an unexpected furor and provoked a surprising number of articles in the European press. Several European officials complained to Tarnoff, Talbott, and Kornblum. It was clear the mini-uproar was really about Dayton, not Imia. The commentary fell into two categories: first, those who said my remarks were right but rude; and second, those who said that they were right and needed to be said. No one took issue with the basic thesis. As Philip Gordon of the International Institute for Strategic Studies wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* on February 17, the comments "hurt so much because Europeans know that such comments are right."

I never expected these remarks would be so widely discussed and remembered. Two years later, people were still asking me about the "While Europe slept thesis."* Of course, my goal had been not to insult the Europeans, but to

* British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind gently objected to the phrase for a personal reason: he told the press later that he had stayed up until 4:00 A.M. working on the same problem. Introducing him at a speech in New York a year later, I offered a customized amendment to the quote: "While Europe, with the exception of Malcolm Rifkind, slept . . ."

encourage them to deal with the unresolved problems of their own history and the convoluted E.U. system. "My comments were not a criticism of any individual nation or any individual," I told Agence France-Presse, "but of an institutional structure which makes it hard for Europe to use its full moral, political, and diplomatic authority in a coherent and consistent way. Every European in Western Europe knows this. It is no secret."

Drama in Sarajevo. We chose Rome for the first post-Dayton summit as a way of emphasizing the importance of Italy. Christopher proceeded with his Middle East diplomacy, and I visited Poland and Hungary before returning to Sarajevo on the morning of February 11 to set up the Rome meeting.

We arrived just in time to be confronted by an unexpected problem: the local police had arrested two senior Bosnian Serb officers, General Djordje Djukic and Colonel Aleksa Krsmanovic, as they entered Sarajevo in a civilian car. The Bosnians claimed the two men were war criminals.

Since the two men had been apprehended in a manner that violated the free-movement provisions of Dayton, we would normally have insisted that the Muslims release them immediately. But Justice Goldstone complicated matters considerably; from the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, he issued a warrant for the two men—even though they had not been indicted. When Shattuck called Goldstone to find out what was going on, he told us he wanted the two men for questioning and possible indictment.

Milosevic, on the other hand, demanded their immediate release. The Bosnian Serbs said they would not cooperate any further with IFOR until they were freed. The Muslims, meanwhile, threatened to try them in a Bosnian court.

In this tense atmosphere, Clark and I met with Admiral Smith on the afternoon of February 11, and asked if he could get the two men out of Sarajevo swiftly and safely. Smith said he could not guarantee that it would be low-risk, but he would develop a plan right away. For once there was no question about IFOR's authority; Smith saw the danger if they remained in the Sarajevo jail.

Our team flew to Belgrade, where Milosevic again demanded the immediate release of the two men, saying that they were simple soldiers. The general, he added, was dying of cancer and needed medication urgently. We told Milosevic that the two men could not be released. As for the health of General Djukic, we would ensure that if he was as sick as Milosevic said, he would get the proper medication. (It turned out that he did indeed have cancer.)

We returned to Sarajevo early the next morning, February 12, tense with concern. Unexpectedly, our visit had turned into a decision-making trip on a risky operation. At 2:00 P.M., I called Goldstone again. He said he had sent the formal request to IFOR two hours earlier for their removal to his jurisdiction. Smith was back in Naples, but he had authorized General Walker to carry out

the operation. Walker described the plan: with the prior knowledge of the Bosnian prison authorities, a small group of specially selected French soldiers would move into the jail at night, grab the two prisoners, and move them quickly to American helicopters for transport to The Hague. The greatest danger, in Walker's view, was that the Serbs would get wind of the operation and try to block it on the roads or shoot the helicopter down, but he felt the risks were acceptable provided they moved fast.

We left Sarajevo just before the operation was to begin. Most of the negotiating team went to Zagreb, while I went to Bucharest for a long-planned visit. The operation went smoothly, but an alert television crew filmed the dramatic nighttime transfer at the prison. The two men were safely delivered to The Hague, where they were held for months by Goldstone before the charges against Colonel Krsmanovic were dropped and General Djukic, now close to death from cancer, was released.

Christopher and I were greatly disturbed by this incident. The seizure of the two men, neither of whom was ever indicted, had disrupted the implementation process and set a bad precedent for the future. We determined to try to prevent any repetition of such an incident before it became a pattern.

Anglo-American Ties. The next three days were a continuous whirl—Zagreb again, then Frankfurt, London, and Paris—before the main event in Rome. My farewell calls with Foreign Secretary Rifkind and Defense Minister Michael Portillo were personally warm, but Ambassador Crowe and I had the sense of meeting government officials who, more than a year before the next election, felt they were already lame ducks.* We had worked together under the most difficult circumstances. When I returned to Washington in September 1994, the strains in the Anglo-American alliance had been at a level that was nearly intolerable, and rebuilding the relationship, which I still believed was "special"—a once-standard phrase that had been banned by the Major government—had been a high priority. At a small farewell dinner at Ambassador Crowe's residence, both Foreign Secretary Rifkind and his predecessor, Douglas Hurd, offered their appreciation for the closing of the gap during the last seventeen months. I repeated my mantra: that when the two nations stood side by side, they could change history, but when they split on an important issue the consequences were invariably disastrous.

Rome. After more farewell calls in Paris, we flew to Rome on February 16 for the first meeting of the three Balkan Presidents since the signing ceremony

* Although neither man could have imagined that he would lose his own House of Commons seat in the landslide victory of Tony Blair and the Labor Party in May 1997.

in December. Admiral Smith, who came to Rome for a few hours, took a dramatic step on the eve of the conference to show that he intended to enforce the military provisions of Dayton. Sending a commando team deep into a mountain area of the Federation on February 17, IFOR raided a "terrorist training camp" and captured eleven "freedom fighters" whom they identified as Iranians, as well as sixty heavy weapons, booby-trapped plastic toys, and a model of an American military headquarters building. Stunned, Izetbegovic claimed that he was unaware of the presence of this group until the raid. Joulwan and I told him that it was immaterial whether or not he knew; the presence of such people on Bosnian soil violated Dayton and constituted a threat to the IFOR troops.

With this dramatic event as background, the first Compliance Summit began on the afternoon of Saturday, February 17, with a welcoming speech by Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli. Christopher and General Joulwan, as well as our team and the Contact Group, sat around a large conference table for the opening session; then we broke down into smaller groups, placing each delegation in separate rooms. For the next two days the corridors of the normally sedate Italian Foreign Ministry reverberated with the arguments of the Balkans—a veritable mini-Dayton. Specific agreements were reached that were designed to get the implementation process back on track: an agreement on what Christopher called the "rules of the road" so that we would never again have to struggle with the consequences of a surprise arrest; a compromise on Mostar that pulled that city, the most explosive in Bosnia, back from the brink of renewed fighting between the Croats and the Muslims; an understanding on improving the performance of the International Police Task Force; and an agreement to hold similar summits regularly.

We returned to Washington on February 19. Two days later, after some more farewell calls and a generous ceremony on the eighth floor of the State Department for the entire negotiating team attended by Secretaries Christopher and Perry, I resigned as Assistant Secretary of State, and immediately signed papers as an unpaid advisor to the Secretary of State. This meant little, except that I would retain my security clearances and be available on short notice to the Administration. That evening, February 21, I left Washington for a new life in New York.