

# Disasters and Progress

(February 1996–April 1998)

This even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips.

— SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*

ON PAPER, DAYTON WAS A GOOD AGREEMENT; it ended the war and established a single, multiethnic country. But countless peace agreements have survived only in history books as case studies in failed expectations. The results of the international effort to implement Dayton would determine its true place in history. And the start was rocky.

**The First Setback.** The unification of Sarajevo under Federation control ninety days after the establishment of IFOR was the first major political deadline of the Dayton agreement, and in many ways the most important. Before Dayton, no outside observer had thought it could happen, and many still doubted that it would. It was, without question, the first key civilian test of Dayton.

Sarajevo was unified precisely on schedule. On March 18, 1996, a group of ragged Bosnian Serb policemen, their voices barely audible over a scratchy recording of the anthem of precommunist Yugoslavia, lowered their flag from the police station in Grbavica and left for Pale. "We saved this area militarily," said Milenko Karisik, a Bosnian Serb Deputy Interior Minister, "but we lost it at Dayton." The next day, the Bosnian Serbs handed over to the Federation the Serb-controlled portions of Sarajevo. There was no fighting, no attempt to prevent the event.

But at the moment that was one of Dayton's greatest achievements, the Bosnian Serbs exploited the passivity of IFOR and the weakness of the enforcing powers to salvage something for their separatist cause. In the two weeks before Sarajevo's unification, Pale ordered all Serbs in Sarajevo to burn down their own apartments and leave the city. They even broadcast detailed

instructions on how to set the fires. (Pile all the furniture in the middle of the room, douse it with kerosene, turn the gas on, and throw a match into the room as you leave.) Young arsonists, mostly thugs from Pale, roamed the streets warning Sarajevo Serbs that if they did not destroy their homes and leave, they would be punished severely, perhaps even killed.

For those Bosnian Serbs who had moved into Sarajevo from the countryside during the war, destroying apartments they would have to leave anyway was easy. But tens of thousands of Sarajevo Serb families had lived in peace for generations in the once-cosmopolitan city. Most were ready to stay had they not been forced to leave. Kris Janowski, the spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, estimated that before the exodus there were seventy thousand Serbs in Sarajevo, of whom at least thirty thousand wanted to stay. After the intimidation tactics of Pale, fewer than ten thousand remained, many of whom would leave soon thereafter. In the week before March 19, a steady stream of Serbs clogged the roads out of Sarajevo, most carrying furniture, plumbing fixtures, and even doors. Behind them rose the smoking remains of Grbavica and Ilidza. "We must not allow a single Serb to remain in the territories which fall under Muslim-Croat control," said Gojko Klickovic, head of the Bosnian Serb Resettlement Office (and later Prime Minister of Republika Srpska).

Journalists reported nearly incomprehensible scenes: a Serb woman beaten and raped by a young Serb thug before he set fire to her apartment; an elderly Serb couple who survived the entire war in Sarajevo appealing futilely to Italian troops as a Serb thug blew up their apartment. Robert Gelbard, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, was visiting Sarajevo at the time at my suggestion; he watched in disgust as IFOR and the International Police Task Force refused to apprehend the marauding arsonists and IFOR kept its own fire-fighting equipment inside the IFOR compound. Desperate, the Muslims sent their antiquated fire-fighting equipment into the Serb portion of the city, where they were attacked by rock-throwing Serb arsonists. But their requests for IFOR protection were refused. Gelbard watched buildings burn as IFOR troops stood by less than 150 meters away, and observed British General Michael Walker, IFOR's second-ranking officer, coolly reject the pleas of the Deputy High Representative, Michael Steiner, for IFOR intervention. "I was ashamed to be associated with it," Gelbard told me later, "to be unable to get IFOR to do anything." A year later, appointed by President Clinton and Secretary Albright to coordinate the faltering implementation effort, Gelbard would make a difference.

This tragedy could have been easily prevented if IFOR had taken action. But although unchallenged and feared, NATO/IFOR did almost nothing. An IFOR spokesman said that while the burnings were "unfortunate," the Serbs

"have the right to burn their own houses." IFOR, said another spokesman, "is not a police force and will not undertake police duties." Shocked by IFOR's sudden passivity, U.N. officials, in an ironic role reversal, now criticized NATO for its inactivity. "If [NATO] had been tougher, things would be different," said Kris Janowski. "We're seeing a multiethnic Bosnia being flushed down the toilet."

It was my first month as a private citizen; I realized too late that I had left too early. Watching with growing anxiety from New York, I called Washington frequently, pleading for action, pointing out that Dayton's "silver bullet" clause gave IFOR full authority in such a situation. But Admiral Smith refused to act, repeating his mantra that IFOR was not a police force, that putting out the fires or arresting the arsonists would be mission creep. That IFOR's passivity was endangering fundamental policy goals of the United States and NATO seemed unimportant to him.

Warren Christopher and Bill Perry finally stepped in and insisted that NATO take action. Reluctantly, Smith and Walker ordered their troops to detain a few of the young arsonists and turn them over to the local authorities, while IFOR put out some of the fires. It was too little, too late. "If anyone thinks this is a success," said U.N. spokesman Janowski, "that would be rather silly. There has been millions of dollars' worth of property damaged in looting and fires, and an exodus when we were supposed to see people returning to their homes."

This was the worst moment of the first two years after Dayton. Not only was it a disaster on its own terms, but it ended the sense of hope and momentum that had begun in late November. Pale used the very exodus it had created as an excuse to prevent Muslims from returning to their homes in the Serb portion of Bosnia. Muslims and Croats read the events as evidence that multiethnic cooperation would not be encouraged by NATO. The message seemed clear: leaders and thugs who preached ethnic division would not be punished or constrained.

Stung by international criticism, the military struck back, publicly blaming the international civilian agencies, particularly Carl Bildt, for the "slippage" in implementing Dayton. But assigning blame was pointless. The events of mid-March provided an object lesson in the tenacity and ruthlessness of the Serbs—and the confusion of the implementing organizations in Bosnia. They also illustrated one of Washington's most important but least understood maxims: *good policy badly executed becomes bad policy.*

**The Toughest Issue.** Until the March disaster, all three ethnic groups in Bosnia, awed by the sight of sixty thousand heavily armed IFOR soldiers, were prepared to do almost anything that IFOR asked. The Bosnian Serbs, in

particular, had been so badly battered, both militarily and politically, that they would have offered little resistance had IFOR enforced tough guidelines. Even Milosevic had encouraged IFOR at first to take a firm line, although he would soon cease to do so. Rallying from the despair they had felt since November, the Bosnian Serbs began to resist on almost every nonmilitary issue, while remaining careful to avoid provoking IFOR. It was almost as if they had an implicit understanding with the IFOR command: we will not attack your forces if you leave us alone to pursue an ethnically divided country.

Of all the things necessary to achieve our goals in Bosnia, the most important was still the arrest of Radovan Karadzic. But Karadzic surfaced after a few months of near seclusion and began issuing orders and giving interviews, signaling his followers that they could still safely pursue their separatist goals. With his military forces neutralized, Karadzic used the "special police," a vestige of the communist police state, to threaten any Bosnian Serb who showed support for Dayton. Even though these units were also covered in the Dayton agreement, IFOR pointedly ignored these "police" as they crossed the Serb portion of Bosnia intimidating anyone who cooperated with Muslims or spoke favorably of Dayton. Karadzic's first major target was the first politician to support Dayton publicly, the mayor of Banja Luka, Predrag Radic, whom he prevented from attending the meeting with President Clinton at Tuzla in January.

While the arrest of Karadzic would not have solved all the problems the international community faced in Bosnia, his removal from power was a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for success. As we had told the President and his senior advisors before Dayton, Karadzic at large was certain to mean Dayton deferred or defeated. Nothing had changed six months later, except that Karadzic was rebuilding his position. While the human-rights community and some members of the State Department, especially John Shattuck and Madeleine Albright, called for action, the military warned of casualties and Serb retaliation if an operation to arrest him took place. They said they would carry it out only if ordered to do so directly by the President; thus if anything went wrong the blame would fall on the civilians who had insisted on the operation, especially on the President himself. This was a heavy burden to lay on any president, particularly during an election year, and it was hardly surprising that no action was taken to mount, or even plan, an operation against Karadzic in 1996 or 1997.

Paradoxically, the same officials who opposed capturing Karadzic supported a tight deadline for American troop withdrawal. The two goals were obviously incompatible; if you wanted to reduce troop levels, capturing Karadzic was essential. Yet still NATO refused to consider arresting Karadzic, arguing that it was too risky and not an IFOR mission.

I raised the issue with Admiral Smith on my "farewell" trip to Sarajevo on February 11, during the same meeting in which we discussed the detention of the two Bosnian Serb officers by the Muslims. The previous day, *The Washington Post* had published John Pomfret's dramatic description of Karadzic driving unchallenged through four NATO checkpoints—two of them manned by Americans—on a trip from Pale to Banja Luka. When I showed Admiral Smith the article, he tossed it contemptuously to an aide while offering a few pithy comments about interfering, know-nothing journalists. He did not deny the story, however. He remained adamant: his forces would not go after indicted war criminals.

**A Letter to the President.** When I left the government, President Clinton had invited me to send him my views from time to time. By early June of 1996, I felt that the situation had reached a point where such a message was justified. I sent copies to Christopher, Lake, and Talbott.

Dear Mr. President:

We are at a decisive moment in the Bosnia peace process. I would like, therefore, to take up your request to send you my views:

The success of IFOR so far is now threatened by Karadzic's success in defying the political portions of Dayton. If he continues to thwart the Dayton powers, the peace process will fail.

This would result, at a minimum, in Bosnia's partition, with the real possibility of further division into three parts within a few years—all of which we have said we oppose. While our national interests are not directly affected by whether Bosnia is one country or two or even three, the outcome in Bosnia will profoundly affect our overall role in the emerging *post-post-Cold War* world. . . .

Of the many organizations in the former Yugoslavia in the last five years, only NATO—that is, the United States—has been respected. What NATO/IFOR demands, happens.

But the reluctance of NATO to go beyond a relatively narrow interpretation of its mission has left a gaping hole in the Bosnia food chain. Recognizing this, the Bosnian Serbs have increasingly defied the Dayton powers. In response, the Bosnian Muslims have moved further from a multiethnic state, as Izetbegovic starts building an undemocratic and fundamentally (although not fundamentalist) Muslim state in his half of the country. . . .

The implications of Karadzic's defiance go far beyond Bosnia itself. If he succeeds, basic issues of American leadership that seemed settled in the public's eye after Dayton will re-emerge. Having reasserted American leadership in Europe, it would be a tragedy if we let it slip away again. . . .

It may seem odd that so much can hang on such a matter as the fate of two odious war criminals. But history is replete with examples of small issues leading to

the unraveling of larger ones. The question of Radovan Karadzic is such an issue. . . . Our goal should be Karadzic's removal not only from his presidential post, but from power. . . .

There are other things that should have been done earlier—but which, if done now, will still make a difference. Several examples:

—Every day Karadzic uses television and the controlled media to prevent local reconciliation efforts. IFOR has the ability and authority to cut these lines, but has refused to do so. These communication lines should be cut—now. This would be a devastating blow to Karadzic, and popular in the United States. . . .

—Sanctions reimposition. We wrote into Dayton the ability to reimpose sanctions if necessary. This is our strongest remaining leverage. . . . I would suggest Milosevic be given a clear message. . . .

**Return to Bosnia.** Calls to capture Karadzic and Mladic were mounting. They came from newspapers around the world, and from Carl Bildt and Senator Dole; from Mort Abramowitz, the respected president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and from the American philanthropist and financier George Soros—who, astonishingly, had spent more of his own money on aid projects in Bosnia than had the United States government.

On the evening of Friday, July 12, the Administration, facing growing international criticism, asked if I would return to the region immediately on a special mission. With the understanding and support of my new colleagues at Crédit Suisse First Boston, I left three days later, after a day in Washington.

The Administration's goal was to remove Karadzic from power or significantly weaken him through diplomatic pressure, thus defusing the pressure for a military operation. As I had written a few weeks earlier to the President, our most potent nonmilitary weapon was the reimposition of economic sanctions against Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs—a right we had carefully retained for ourselves in the Dayton agreement, but only until ten days after the national elections scheduled for September 14.

When I saw Christopher, Talbott, Tarnoff, and Berger separately on Monday, July 15, it was clear that Washington was uneasy about using sanctions. With only hours left before departure for Bosnia, I argued that the threat of sanctions was important if our team was to have a chance of success. When several officials expressed concern that reimposition would upset the Europeans, I reminded them that we would lose the power to reimpose sanctions in only seventy days. "Use it before we lose it," was my slogan for the day.

The key meeting took place with Sandy Berger in the late afternoon. Lake was away; we met in his empty office. He said no consensus could be forged in time for our trip. After close to an hour of intense discussion, Sandy said, "Look, you and I have been friends for twenty years. Don't ask for something

we can't give you. Just go out there and do what you can. We know you will make it sound better than it is." He laughed, and clapped me on the shoulder. "That's why we asked you back," he said. On the way to the airport I called Strobe to describe the meeting. He confirmed my impression. "Just use that old creative ambiguity," he said.

"We are here," I told the press when we landed at the Sarajevo airport on Tuesday, July 16, "because we are not satisfied with the degree of compliance we are seeing, particularly on the part of the Bosnian Serbs." Our first meeting was with Robert Frowick, the urbane American diplomat whom we had chosen to head up the OSCE mission in Bosnia and run the elections. He was at a crossroads. So far he had allowed Karadzic's party, the SDS, to take a major role in the election preparations, but he was increasingly troubled by their behavior, which included stuffing the registration rolls and intimidating potential voters. Frowick had the authority to declare any party or individual ineligible. The deadline for a final decision was almost upon him—within three days he had to decide whether or not to allow Karadzic's party to participate in the elections, scheduled for September 14.

Disenfranchising the SDS was tempting but risky. It might provoke a boycott of the elections, but it would remove from the electoral process the party that was, more than any other force in Bosnia, trying to prevent Dayton from succeeding. But before we came to any conclusions, it was essential to find out what Izetbegovic wanted to do; his views would be critical.

Izetbegovic, whom I had not seen in five months, seemed a changed man, cracking small jokes and smiling. He thanked me profusely for what I "had done for Bosnia," and noted that we had kept our promises to his government. When we were alone I outlined the core issue. "Mr. President," I said, "we can disqualify the SDS from the election process if we wish, by declaring that the entire party is in violation of the Dayton agreement. On the other hand, if Milosevic helps us remove Karadzic from power, we can allow the SDS to participate in the elections. What we do next with the SDS is essentially in our hands, and we need to know your views."

This was a huge decision for Izetbegovic, and he said he would have an answer for us when we returned from Belgrade and Zagreb in somewhat more than twenty-four hours.

The next day, July 17, our team met with Milosevic over a long lunch in Belgrade. We were blunt: if we were unable to get a satisfactory agreement, we would "recommend" that sanctions be reimposed and that Frowick disqualify the SDS from the elections. Incredulous, Milosevic was asked to see me alone. Members of our team, including Goldberg and Owen, could hear his

voice through the doors between the two rooms, as he angrily charged that we were wrecking the Dayton agreement. I replied that it was Karadzic who was trying to destroy Dayton. Our goal was to get him "out of power and out of country." After a prolonged argument, we agreed to meet again the next day.

We returned to Sarajevo on the morning of July 18. It was another of those meetings whose consequences would be felt for a long time.

"The SDS is the Nazi Party of our country," Izetbegovic began. "But if we throw them out of the elections, they could organize a boycott, like they did the last time. If you can get Karadzic out of power, I think it is much better to let them run. I can work with Krajisnik. I know how to deal with him."

Izetbegovic could work with Krajisnik? The comment was surprising. The speaker of the Pale assembly, the man who at Dayton had slammed his fist into the map of Sarajevo, widely known as "Mr. No," was as much of a rejectionist as Karadzic. But Izetbegovic was worried about the effect of an SDS boycott. While the decision remained ours, Izetbegovic's desire not to throw the SDS out of the elections, his fear that they could wreck the elections, was a powerful message that the international community could not ignore.

Milosevic moved our July 18 meeting to a new venue, a government villa in the residential section of Belgrade. At 4:00 P.M., seated in the garden of the villa, we began a ten-hour negotiating session that mirrored some of the early shuttle drama and produced an agreement that defused the crisis—but at a price.

Milosevic came to the point quickly. "Krajisnik and Buha are upstairs," he said, pointing to windows on the second-floor of the villa. "They are ready to negotiate right now over the future of Karadzic." This tactic, so stunning eleven months earlier when Milosevic had produced Karadzic and Mladic, was no longer shocking. Asking to meet first without the two Bosnian Serbs, we presented Milosevic with a tough document, announcing the resignation of Karadzic from the presidencies of both Republika Srpska and the SDS, effective the next day. Our draft also announced that Karadzic would leave Bosnia and comply with the International War Crimes Tribunal.

Milosevic objected strongly to almost every detail of our draft. Finally, we agreed to bring the two Bosnian Serbs into the discussion. They were in a sullen mood. Krajisnik made not the slightest attempt to be civil; Buha simply sat in silence. But as Krajisnik realized that the removal of his friend and mentor Karadzic would directly benefit him, he became increasingly interested in our proposals. Still, Krajisnik was immovable on the possibility that Karadzic leave Bosnia. "Maybe later, but never tonight, with the world watching," Krajisnik said emotionally as Buha, thin-faced and gaunt, glared at us. "And there is nothing we can do to force him."

"Why don't you send him to stay with his mother and his smuggler brother in his native village in Montenegro?" I asked, half-seriously, half-facetiously. Krajisnik seemed stunned at this reference to the private activities of Karadzic's brother; we believed that Krajisnik was part of the same smuggling operations. I thought of an earlier conversation with a senior Serb official who had told us that Karadzic and Krajisnik had become friends when they were both jailed, one for passing bad checks, the other for stealing cement from public projects. We did not know if this story was true, but, as Phil Goldberg said, "it felt right."

Shortly after ten in the evening, after a great deal of argument, the Bosnian Serbs signed an agreement that removed Radovan Karadzic "immediately and permanently [from] all public and private activities," including his two official positions—President of Republika Srpska and president of the SDS. Mrs. Biljana Plavsic, one of the Vice Presidents of the Bosnian Serbs, would be named President the next day, and Buha would become the acting head of the SDS. Stressing the importance of the pledge that Karadzic also cease "public activities," I cited a number of examples, especially his appearances on television and the use of posters bearing his likeness, that would constitute violations. Although clearly unhappy, Krajisnik and Buha agreed; Karadzic would not appear on television, and his image would not be displayed.

We were still lacking the most important signature, that of Karadzic himself. Milosevic proposed that we obtain it by fax. I rejected this; we did not want Karadzic to claim later that his signature was a faxed forgery. So at our insistence, Milosevic sent his intelligence chief, Jovica Stanisic, to Pale by helicopter to obtain Karadzic's signature personally. After dinner—the best he had ever offered us, lamb, yogurt, and spinach—we left to call Washington. I read the draft statement to Tarnoff, who walked it through "the system" with impressive speed, obtaining Washington's support in less than ninety minutes. We returned to Milosevic's villa at about 2:00 A.M. to meet Stanisic, who presented us with the original document, now signed by Karadzic. Stanisic told us Karadzic seemed "resigned to the end of his political career." But he was not ready to leave Pale, Stanisic said. I wondered aloud if Karadzic's political career had *really* reached the end of the road.

Karadzic stepped down from both posts the next day, and faded out of public sight—even television—for the rest of the year. The world's press hailed the agreement and praised our efforts; in the words of the *Financial Times*, it was "another success."

Our team, drained by two almost sleepless nights and the long flight back from Belgrade, the last hour of it bouncing through violent thunderstorms, drove directly to the White House to join a Principals' Committee meeting al-

ready in progress, where we were greeted with a standing ovation that left us moved but a bit stunned. Our colleagues were more impressed with the July 18 agreement than we were. We were ambivalent about what we had done. We had achieved *just enough* to allow elections with SDS participation, and *just enough* to relieve the pressure for the rest of the year for a military operation against Karadzic—an operation I still favored. We might be “whistling past the graveyard,” as Strobe put it, but it was just what Washington wanted.

I repeated my earlier recommendation that we close down the SDS television network, but this was again rejected on the grounds that it was either too provocative or impossible to carry out.\* I also told the Principals' Committee that we had to move immediately against Pale if there were the slightest violation of the July 18 agreement. But by the beginning of 1997, these admonitions and proposals would be forgotten or ignored, and Karadzic, sensing another opportunity, would emerge once more.

**The September 14 Elections.** Two months later, I was back in Bosnia, this time as the head of the Presidential Observer Mission to the elections. The team, which had been assembled by the White House, consisted of a group of private citizens and several Congressmen, including two powerful Democrats, John Murtha of Pennsylvania and Steny Hoyer of Maryland, and Peter King, a Republican from New York. Thousands of other international supervisors, observers, monitors, and journalists were crawling all over the country.

The elections chose the three-person presidency and the national assembly established by the Dayton agreement. They were relatively trouble-free, and unquestionably constituted progress—Warren Christopher called them a remarkable success. But none of the winners was in favor of a truly multiethnic government. The election strengthened the very separatists who had started the war.

Many observers later cited this as proof that the people of Bosnia wanted to separate along ethnic lines. I did not share this assessment; the elections took place in an atmosphere poisoned by a media controlled by the same people who had started the war. Advocates of reconciliation in all three communities were intimidated by thugs and overwhelmed by media that carried nothing but racist propaganda. The full costs of failing to close down the SDS television stations now came home. And on the Muslim side, all was not well either; in one particularly ominous incident, zealots from Izetbegovic's party beat up Haris Silajdzic, almost killing him, as he spoke in favor of a multiethnic

\* Neither argument against action had merit. Fourteen months later, on October 1, 1997, the NATO forces finally closed down the Pale television transmitters, depriving Karadzic and his party of one of their most powerful instruments of power. Although controversial to the last moment, when it took place the action was accomplished without incident or injury—and had the desired effect.

Bosnia during an election rally. On the Serb side, Milosevic ran a handpicked candidate, but the victory that he had long promised never materialized; Krajisnik won the Serb seat in the three-person co-presidency of Bosnia by a vote of 508,026 to 240,000. Biljana Plavsic won the presidency of Republika Srpska with ease. She was, at the time, the most popular Bosnian Serb. Nothing could have prepared us for the open confrontation she would have with her Pale mentors in less than eight months.

**Clinton II and the Together Movement.** Bosnia faded as an issue in the 1996 presidential campaign. In addition to the relative success of the effort, Senator Dole also deserved credit as well; he ignored every opportunity to exploit the issue because, as he told me later, he did not want to hurt a policy he now "basically agreed with." Dole even said publicly that he would favor extending IFOR beyond its one-year limit, but the Administration failed to seize this generous opening to get out from under the twelve-month deadline, and, with Dole's defeat in November, it was gone.

Even a re-elected president goes through a transition period, although it is almost invisible to the public eye. Outgoing officials tend to lose interest in the details of policy, as they prepare to return to the private sector. The Clinton Administration effected a smooth transition in most areas, especially at State, where the new Secretary, Madeleine Albright, was familiar with most of the major issues from her U.N. tour, and at the NSC, where Sandy Berger simply moved up (without the need for Senate confirmation) to replace Tony Lake.

Still, the new team—much of it far below the Cabinet level—had to await Senate confirmation. Even the smoothest shifts take time, and in the Balkans events did not pause for our transition. A remarkable challenge to Milosevic unfolded in the streets of Belgrade in December, led by three politicians who banded together into a movement they called Zajedno, or the Together Movement. For weeks, hundreds of thousands of Belgrade citizens braved sub-freezing weather to call for democracy. But Washington missed a chance to affect events; except for one ineffectual trip to Washington, Zajedno had no contact with senior American government officials, and the Administration sent no senior officials to Belgrade for fear that their visits would be used by Milosevic to show support. For the first time in eighteen months, Milosevic felt no significant American pressure, and turned back toward the extreme nationalists, including Karadzic, for support. His tactical skills saved him again, and within weeks, the Together Movement was together no more, as its leaders split among themselves.

On Sunday, December 8, three days after Madeleine Albright was named Secretary of State, we met at her house in Georgetown. I offered her my full sup-

port, and noted that her well-known tough line on Bosnia made her the ideal person to reinvigorate the policy. She said this was her firm intention. Nonetheless, by April there was a general impression that "Clinton II" was downgrading Bosnia. In Europe, the emphasis was almost entirely on a critical summit meeting with Boris Yeltsin, planned for Helsinki, that would determine the fate of the Administration's plan to enlarge NATO. China also took center stage in internal policy discussions. The comparative silence on Bosnia during the early months of 1997 was broken primarily by the incoming Secretary of Defense, Senator William Cohen, who made a series of statements that the United States would end its troop presence in Bosnia in eighteen months—that is, June 1998.

Sensing that high-level American interest had declined, Karadzic ventured once more into public view, testing how flagrantly he could violate the agreement I had negotiated the previous July without provoking a NATO response. Finding nothing in his way, he even gave on-the-record interviews to European journalists. His re-emergence went unchallenged by the military, and suggested, as many journalists reported, that personnel in IFOR—now renamed SFOR, or Stabilization Force—were simply counting the days until their departure.

Finally, in April, after a highly successful Clinton-Yeltsin summit in Helsinki—in which President Clinton obtained Yeltsin's acceptance of NATO enlargement—the Administration, led by Madeleine Albright and Sandy Berger, began to focus again on Bosnia. As part of this process, Robert Gelbard was appointed to coordinate all U.S. government efforts to implement Dayton. This made sense; Washington needed a tough, full-time "czar" and Gelbard, who had been working on Bosnia sporadically since I had asked him to strengthen the International Police Task Force in December 1995, was an excellent choice. Gelbard's background was unusually varied for a Foreign Service officer; in addition to both economic and political experience, he had extensive firsthand knowledge of law enforcement and counterterrorism, and was a skilled bureaucratic infighter.

**An Unusual Birthday Party.** Washington is well known as a city where social events can have policy consequences. Such was the case with a memorable party given by Liz Stevens on Friday, April 4, in honor of her husband, the gifted filmmaker George Stevens, and Kati, who shared the same birthday. Without telling us or most of the other guests, Liz had invited the Clintons. We arrived early to find Secret Service agents all over the house. A few minutes later, ahead of other guests, the Clintons walked in.

To be precise, Hillary walked; the President limped in on crutches. Only a month earlier he had famously, and seriously, injured himself in a fall outside

the home of the golfer Greg Norman. Less famously, I had injured myself at about the same time, tearing ligaments in my ankle. When we met, I was also on crutches, to the President's amusement, and we spent a few minutes comparing our rehabilitation programs. As he left, the President pulled me aside for a moment and said, "Come by tomorrow and we can do some therapy and talk."

The next day, Saturday, April 5, I presented myself at the White House and was ushered upstairs to the family quarters, where the President was already working out on a bicycle machine. Gesturing me into an adjoining room, he asked his therapist, a Navy commander, to look at my injury. We worked out in silence for a while as if it were the most natural thing in the world, and then adjourned to another room to cool down.

Members of his family, including Hillary and her mother, Dorothy Rodham, stopped by to chat. It seemed simultaneously completely ordinary and completely extraordinary, casual conversation with this nice, average American family—except that one of them happened to be the President. As I was beginning to wonder if we would ever discuss Bosnia, he said, "Let's go downstairs." With that we hobbled down to his office in the family quarters.

It is in the nature of the hierarchical relationship of the Executive Branch that such a meeting would have been almost impossible while I was still in the government. There are simply too many layers between an Assistant Secretary and the Chief Executive, and everyone in the chain of command would have insisted on either being there, changing the nature of the meeting, or preventing such a discussion from even occurring.

"What's going on out there?" the President began. Before the meeting, I had decided, with Strobe's enthusiastic urging, to be completely candid if the opportunity arose. I listed the series of reverses and lost opportunities since December: the collapse of the Together Movement; increasingly public activity by Karadzic; brutal behavior by Tudjman toward the remaining Serbs in Croatia; heightened tensions between the Croats and the Muslims within the Federation, especially at Mostar; and American passivity or worse.

"While NATO policy and your achievement with Yeltsin have been historic," I said, "Bosnia has gone nowhere since Dayton. These issues are inter-related. We said that we'll leave Bosnia in June 1998, which is not possible. People out there are not even sure we still support Dayton, or if we still care what happens in Bosnia. And we are losing irretrievable time."

I urged him to give Albright and Gelbard his full backing. Sensing that he was receptive, I spoke even more bluntly than I had planned, urging him to speak out forcefully on the issue. Finally, the President walked me to the elevator, and then, crutches and all, accompanied me all the way to my car, which was waiting at the South Portico of the White House.

The "therapy session," as Strobe called it, was timely. Both Berger and Albright said later that it was important in getting policy focused and revitalized at a critical moment. Meanwhile, Berger's formal policy review proceeded, and Gelbard "went operational."

**The Policy Toughens.** With the press filled with stories about Albright-Cohen and State-Pentagon conflicts over Bosnia, the President flew to Europe twice: first, to sign the NATO-Russia Founding Act on May 27 in Paris, which formalized Russia's role in the security architecture of post-Cold War Europe; and second, to attend a historic NATO summit on July 9 in Madrid that invited Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to join NATO. It was a remarkable achievement, defying the predictions of many critics who said that NATO enlargement would do irreparable damage to relations between Russia and the United States.

In May, Berger overrode the doubts of some Pentagon officials; his study reaffirmed a solidly pro-Dayton policy. At the suggestion of several Administration officials, I spoke to the President again on Sunday, May 24, three days before his meetings with Yeltsin in Paris, to argue that if we did not revitalize Bosnia policy immediately it might be too late to salvage Dayton.

Meanwhile, the new British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made clear that they would follow a more aggressive policy, and urged the same from the United States. When the President, during a joint press conference with Blair in the garden at 10 Downing Street on May 29, was asked about reports of a conflict between Albright and Cohen over Bosnia, he sidestepped the controversy but made it clear that he wanted Dayton to succeed.

As the President returned to Washington, Albright and Gelbard went to Sintra, Portugal, for a meeting of the NATO Foreign Ministers. The NATO countries invited the leaders of Bosnia to Sintra, and, after intense meetings, issued a statement that recommitted them to Dayton. From Sintra, Albright made her first trip to the region as Secretary of State, traveling to Zagreb, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, and Belgrade on May 31. Given her high profile—"the most popular political figure in America," in the words of Joe Klein—her trip brought attention back to American policy in Bosnia. We talked several times before and during the trip, and she called one last time around midnight, from Zagreb, the evening before she went to Belgrade for her first meeting with Milosevic. She was the first Secretary of State to visit Belgrade since James Baker's unfortunate trip in June 1991.

Throughout her visit, Albright showed a deft sense of how to communicate with the people of the region. Perhaps this was a function of her background; after all, she had not only been born in Czechoslovakia but spent part of her