

Choosing Dayton, Getting Ready

(October 5-25)

How did a snake get in the tower?

Delayed in the democracies

By departmental vanities,

The rival sergeants run about

But more to squabble than find out.

—W. H. AUDEN, *New Year Letter*

WE KEPT THE CEASE-FIRE SECRET long enough for President Clinton to break the news. At 11:00 A.M. on October 5, he announced “an important moment in the painful history” of the former Yugoslavia. A general cease-fire would take effect in five days, he said, if the gas and electricity were turned on in Sarajevo. This would be followed by talks among the three Balkan Presidents, which would take place in the United States.

At the very moment the President spoke, our team was in Zagreb, urging Tudjman to capture more territory before the cease-fire took effect. The Croats had virtually stopped their advance, and Sanski Most and Prijedor still lay inside Serb lines. “You have five days left, that’s all,” I said. “What you don’t win on the battlefield will be hard to gain at the peace talks. Don’t waste these last days.”

Tudjman requested that we delay the start of the peace conference until the beginning of November, so that it would not interfere with the Croatian parliamentary elections. We agreed. As it turned out, we needed every minute of that extra week to get ready.

Before leaving the region, we laid down three conditions for the negotiations:

- first, that each President come to the United States with full power to sign agreements, without further recourse to parliaments back home;

- second, that they stay as long as necessary to reach agreement, without threatening to walk out; and
- third, that they not talk to the press or other outsiders.

All three Presidents agreed to these conditions, although Izetbegovic and Sacirbey objected to the third provision, claiming that they had important friends in Congress and the press with whom they had to keep in touch. We said that serious negotiations were incompatible with the sort of outside contacts they had in mind. Milosevic, reading the document, protested mockingly that we were trying to make him a prisoner. Although this document had no official standing, the three parties generally stuck to its terms—until the final dramatic hours in Dayton.

Akashi. Our last call in Zagreb before returning to Washington was on U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's senior representative in the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, whom I had known since my two visits to Cambodia in 1992. Akashi had been harshly treated by the press and castigated by critics of the U.N. for his weakness. But it was not entirely his fault: he was operating under tight constraints imposed by Boutros-Ghali. Furthermore, Akashi was virtually ignored by General Janvier and the U.N. military. We asked Akashi to make his first priority the quick reopening of the electrical lines, which had been cut and mined. Then we bade each other goodbye, almost emotionally. I felt sorry for Akashi. He was leaving Zagreb with his previously distinguished record blemished, but his mission had been doomed from the start because of limits imposed from New York. The United States was delighted with his replacement: Kofi Annan, who was already flying to Zagreb to take up temporary residence. Since the August bombing crisis, Annan was the U.N. official in whom we had the greatest confidence, and his arrival was good news.

Rome. As our team flew to Rome, Warren Christopher called each Contact Group Foreign Minister to propose that the talks be co-chaired by the United States, the European Union, and Russia at the "Holbrooke-Bildt-Ivanov level." He would participate only when required. Christopher was concerned that if he attended the entire conference, the other Foreign Ministers would also insist on attending, which would make the negotiations unmanageable.

The Europeans accepted the American decision to host the talks without complaint, with the exception of the French. To mollify them, Christopher kept open the possibility of a signing ceremony in Paris. Rifkind expressed concern, verging on anger, at the French position, stressing that the British

government had never agreed to Paris. But not wishing to turn this into a public problem, he said that the British would be content to host an "implementation conference" shortly after a signing ceremony.

The expanded Contact Group meeting was designed to satisfy the Italians. Foreign Minister Agnelli began it on October 5 with a dinner in the Renaissance splendor of the Villa Madama, the official guest house of the Italian Foreign Ministry. For someone who had eaten breakfast in Belgrade and lunch in Sarajevo, the scene was disorienting, so enormous was the distance between Rome's classical grandeur and the ugly realities we had just left.

The Europeans who were not part of the Contact Group praised American diplomacy and leadership. But there was a clear undercurrent of resentment among some Contact Group members over American "unilateralism." When I noted that the U.N. seemed reluctant to try to open the roads around Sarajevo, Pauline Neville-Jones exploded, charging that I was trying to "set the U.N. and the Europeans up" to be blamed for a failure. I was unprepared for this outburst. I was not interested in discussing the possibility of failure, I said. We needed to lay the groundwork for a success in which we would all share. For that, the most rigorous enforcement of every detail of every agreement was essential. I expressed myself acidly, criticizing those mired in bureaucratic maneuvers at such a critical juncture in European history. It was probably unwise of me to rise to the bait, but I was trying to lay down a strong marker against unproductive procedural proposals. With her usual grace, Sunni Agnelli moved the discussion to less turbulent issues.

Despite this tense beginning, the Rome meetings were useful. The next morning, October 6, the Italians formally convened an expanded Contact Group meeting, followed by a special, even larger meeting designed to promote economic recovery of the region—the first time we had focused on the long-term economic needs of the region.

With Italy having finally hosted a Bosnia conference, Moscow wanted its moment in the limelight. Each major European nation wished to host an international meeting, designed in large part to demonstrate to its domestic audience that it was involved in the peace process. John Kornblum termed this phenomenon "conference proliferation," and we complained constantly about it as time-consuming and redundant. However, we recognized that these meetings were important for European-American unity.

Albright and the U.N. The United Nations intended to request a place as a fourth co-chair of the negotiations. Madeleine Albright and I were strong longtime supporters of the United Nations, but we both felt that the U.N.'s participation in the talks would further complicate them. In the end, we agreed

that the U.N. representative, Thorvald Stoltenberg, would participate in the negotiations only when they involved eastern Slavonia, and over the next three weeks Madeleine held the U.N. at bay in its quest for a larger role. Telling the U.N. that its involvement would weaken the search for peace was painful, especially for those of us who had grown up believing in the importance of the world body. But Albright stepped up to the task without complaint, and performed with a toughness that was productive if not always popular. In this period, our working relationship became progressively closer and more effective. As she often put it, we had been "joined at the hip" on every key European issue. She also felt a special kinship with my wife, Kati, like herself a product of a Central European refugee family.

The struggle over the U.N.'s role foreshadowed the American determination a year later to oppose Boutros-Ghali's quest for a second term as Secretary-General. More than any other issue, it was his performance on Bosnia that made us feel he did not deserve a second term—just as Kofi Annan's strength on the bombing in August had already made him the private favorite of many American officials. Although the American campaign against Boutros-Ghali, in which all our key allies opposed us, was long and difficult—especially for Albright, who bore heavy and unjust criticism for her role—the decision was correct, and may well have saved America's role in the United Nations.

Albright and Talbott were also deeply involved in another complicated aspect of the cease-fire agreement—the effort to open the gas lines to Sarajevo. The Russians controlled the pipeline through Gazprom, which did not want to start the gas flowing until it received \$100 million in unpaid bills. The Bosnians were furious; most of the debt, they said, was for gas that had been siphoned off by the Serbs. More important, they did not have the money.

To solve the impasse, Milosevic sent his Prime Minister to Moscow with a personal plea to Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin to open the gas lines immediately and work out the back payments later. Silajdzic also flew to Moscow, hoping to gain credit in Sarajevo for getting the gas turned on. Meanwhile, our Ambassador in Moscow, Thomas Pickering, struggled with the Russian Foreign Ministry and Gazprom through several long nights. Talbott and Leon Fuerth activated the Gore-Chernomyrdin channel, the key working-level mechanism for American-Russian cooperation. Participating in this frustrating subplot through constant telephone calls—the remarkable final conference call included Pickering, Albright, Menzies, Tarnoff, Donilon, Chris Hoh, Nick Burns, and me, all in different locations—I had the impression that for the Russians the issue was financial, not political; the famously powerful and greedy leaders of Gazprom were simply trying to squeeze the Bosnians for back payments, and only Chernomyrdin himself could break the

logjam. Still, the gas was not turned on, and the fighting continued. While slamming Moscow for what it regarded as blackmail, Sarajevo took advantage of the cease-fire delay to accelerate the military offensive, which had picked up last-minute momentum.

The Birth of IFOR. On the same day that the President announced the cease-fire and we met in Rome, Secretary of Defense Perry concluded a special two-day session of the sixteen NATO Defense Ministers in Williamsburg, Virginia. The announcement of the cease-fire gave added urgency to his effort to forge a consensus on the first peacekeeping force in NATO's storied history. With surprisingly little difficulty, the ministers gave Perry support for a structure without precedent—one that would enforce a peace agreement and include both NATO and non-NATO troops. NATO's Supreme Commander, General Joulwan, told the ministers he wanted a force of fifty to sixty thousand troops, with separate American, French, and British operational zones. The United States would contribute about one third of the troops, at an estimated annual cost of close to \$2 billion. The peacekeeping force would be called the Implementation Force—or IFOR.

Perry also planned to meet with his Russian counterpart, Marshal Pavel S. Grachev, in Geneva two days later to pursue a visionary goal: bringing Russian troops into a Bosnian peacekeeping force. Moscow bitterly opposed the enlargement of NATO, and we were often at cross-purposes over Bosnia, where the Kremlin resented and feared the reassertion of American leadership. Not since World War II had Russian, American, and other Western European forces served together under a common command. But President Clinton, Perry, and Strobe Talbott, the President's most influential advisor on Russian policy, believed that if Russia participated in Bosnia, it would be a historic step in the development of cooperation between countries that had been Cold War adversaries only four years earlier.

Site X. Tom Donilon took over responsibility for finding an acceptable place—which we code-named Site X—for the talks. He assigned the job to the Assistant Secretary of State for Administrative Affairs, Patrick F. Kennedy, an intense, no-nonsense official with over twenty years of government experience as an administrative specialist. Kennedy, with whom I had worked during the Carter Administration, came to my office on October 10 with his aide, Ken Messner, to find out what kind of site we wanted. I repeated our mantra: physical arrangements could make a difference; every detail mattered. Site X would have to hold nine delegations—each Balkan country, the five Contact Group nations, and E.U. representative Bildt. Ideally we wanted an area we could seal off from the press and all other outsiders, close enough to Wash-

ington so that senior Administration officials could visit, yet sufficiently remote, as Michael Dobbs later put it in *The Washington Post*, "to discourage Balkan warlords from running off to television studios in New York and Washington every time the negotiations hit a snag."

The President's retreat at Camp David was too close to Washington, too small, too "presidential," and too closely identified with the 1978 negotiations between Egypt and Israel. Hearing our requirements, Kennedy observed that a military base would best meet our needs. After Wes Clark and I called Jan Lodal, the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Bill Perry ordered the Pentagon to help Kennedy find Site X immediately.

Kennedy quickly narrowed the search to three sites: the Navy base at Newport, Rhode Island; Langley Air Force Base in Norfolk, Virginia; and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. When the possibility of Newport arose, Senator Claiborne Pell called to offer us access to some of the great houses along the water in his home state. Though the idea of Milosevic, Izetbegovic, and Tudjman wandering around The Breakers was amusing to contemplate, the facilities at Newport were too spread out. Unable to make the site inspections myself, I asked Rosemarie Pauli to help Kennedy. As they drove around Wright-Patterson, a sprawling base that contained twenty-three thousand government personnel, Kennedy noticed five visiting officers' quarters (VOQs) grouped around a central parking lot, only a few feet apart. He and Rosemarie decided that while some of the rooms would need substantial improvement, in all other ways Wright-Patterson filled our needs.

And so Dayton was chosen for the talks, to everyone's surprise. At the time, it did not sound like an impressive place for a major international conference. As Dobbs wrote in *The Washington Post*, "Camp David it isn't." When we told Milosevic the news on October 17, he protested, half-jokingly, that he did not want "to be locked up like a priest"—a remark that later leaked to Roger Cohen of *The New York Times*, much to Milosevic's annoyance. The Europeans, used to negotiations in more opulent settings, literally had no idea where Dayton was, and expressed open unhappiness with a site "somewhere in the middle of America." Carl Bildt worried about the hawkish imagery of a military base. But I thought that reminders of American airpower would not hurt.

Studying Camp David. We could find no exact precedents for the negotiations on which we were about to embark. The closest model, of course, was the Camp David talks in September 1978, when President Carter forged the historic agreement between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin that ended thirty years of armed hostility and wars between Egypt and Israel. As we flew around the Balkans in October, I distributed to every member of our team Carter's own account of those thirteen

days, as well as the section on Camp David in Cyrus Vance's memoirs, *Hard Choices*, and William Quandt's *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*. Dan Hamilton of the European Bureau also interviewed Quandt and Harold Saunders, who had been Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the time of Camp David, about every detail, no matter how small, concerning the talks, including eating arrangements, telephone connections to the outside world, and the handling of the press. Of greatest interest to us was the question of personal relations between the leaders at Camp David. Had the Americans been able to create any sort of personal rapport between Sadat and Begin? Could we do so at Dayton? Do people become more malleable after being cooped up for days? Will sheer fatigue make tempers flare?

I phoned President Carter and listened in fascination as he described how he had tried without success to get Sadat and Begin to talk directly to each other. He had then reverted to "proximity talks," a diplomatic technique originating in Mideast negotiations held in the 1940s at the U.N., in which the mediator moves between the two parties, who rarely meet one another face-to-face—a sort of "shuttle diplomacy by foot." We already assumed that this would be our pattern, and always referred to Dayton as "proximity peace talks." Carter recounted his constant efforts to reduce the personal distaste between the two men. His most memorable effort was a field trip to the Gettysburg battlefield, where, he hoped, being at a site of wasted sacrifice would produce a breakthrough. No such thing happened, of course, and Carter sat in the car between Sadat and Begin for hours, their knees touching, while they ignored each other.

Preparations. By the second week of October, preparations had become frantic. Several task forces framed positions on every issue from elections to the creation of a joint railroad commission. Robert Gallucci, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, was given responsibility for coordinating implementation of civilian activities if an agreement was reached.

Our strategy for Dayton was both ambitious and simple: we would never have a better chance to end the war in Bosnia—and therefore we sought to address as many issues as possible in the final agreements. What was not negotiated at Dayton would not be negotiated later. We recognized that implementation would be at least as difficult as the negotiations themselves, but we rejected the minimalist theory that we should negotiate only those matters on which implementation would be relatively easy. Later we would be criticized for being overly ambitious, but the alternative would have been a "small" agreement, not much more than a cease-fire—and an opportunity lost, perhaps forever.

While the preparations continued at home, teams spread out across Europe to conduct three simultaneous negotiations. First, Slocombe, Kornblum, and

Clark flew to Brussels to gain more support for a multinational NATO-led force. Observing the response to their trip, Perry said that NATO had finally "emerged from a long dark tunnel of indecision and irresolution."

Second, Perry and Talbott continued their negotiations with Moscow on Russia's role in a peacekeeping force. President Clinton discussed this with Yeltsin by phone on September 27 and in person with Kozyrev one week later; Perry, Slocombe, and Talbott saw Marshal Grachev in Geneva on October 8. The Russians wanted to participate in any military force in Bosnia, but they wanted it led not by NATO but by either the United Nations or some special coalition in which they played a role equal to that of the United States. Although the President, Perry, and Talbott had explained repeatedly to the Russians that this was impossible—"a deal breaker," as Strobe put it, because it would destroy the key principle of NATO, unity of command—the Russians did not budge.

The third negotiating track remained in the Balkans. I was already committed to a Contact Group meeting in Moscow, and the French had insisted that we stop first in Paris. We timed our travel so we could hold the Contact Group meeting in Moscow, join Talbott and Slocombe for the discussions on the Russian role in peacekeeping, and then return to the Balkans for a final "pre-Dayton systems check."

The fighting in western Bosnia intensified as the cease-fire approached. NATO planes swung back into action, attacking a Bosnian Serb command bunker after the Serbs shelled a U.N. base southeast of Tuzla and killed a twenty-nine-year-old Norwegian peacekeeper. Both sides tried to make last-minute gains, with the Federation forces having much the better of it. Facing the end of the fighting, the Croats and the Bosnians finally buried their differences, if only momentarily, and took Sanski Most and several other smaller towns. But Prijedor still eluded them. For reasons we never fully understood, they did not capture this important town, a famous symbol of ethnic cleansing.*

* In March 1997, I attended a showing at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York of a powerful documentary film, *Calling the Ghosts*, that recounted the brutal treatment two Bosnian women from Prijedor had suffered during their incarceration at the notorious Omarska prison camp. Following the film, the two women angrily asked me why they were still unable to return to their hometown. I told them we'd repeatedly encouraged an assault on Prijedor. They were astonished; they said General Dudakovic, the Bosnian commander, had told them personally that "Holbrooke would not let us capture Prijedor and Bosanski Novi." I subsequently learned that this story was widely believed in the region.

This revisionism was not surprising; it absolved Dudakovic and his associates of responsibility for their failure to take Prijedor. I suspect the truth is that after the September 18 disaster at the Una River the Croats did not want to fight for a town they would have had to turn over to the Muslims—and the Bosnians could not capture it unaided.

Other parts of the cease-fire agreement were slowly falling into place. The power lines into the capital were steadily being restored as the Serbs and the Croats showed U.N. engineers the location of the mines. However, despite Russian promises, Gazprom continued to delay the reopening of the gas lines into Sarajevo. Finally, after several days of drama, Pickering obtained a serious offer from the Russians: they would agree to await later payment of the unpaid bills, and open the valves, provided the Bosnians agreed not to hold them responsible for any explosions or other damage caused when the gas went back on. When Sarajevo agreed, the gas began to flow (without any serious explosions). On October 11, in a dramatic moment, the lights began to flicker on all over the city, and the first tentative bursts of gas started through the pipes in Sarajevo. A few hours later, wild shooting broke out all over Sarajevo—not fighting, but celebrations. The cease-fire had officially started, although fighting continued for a few more days in the west.

Before leaving for Paris and Moscow, I planned a weekend on Long Island. The President wanted a final discussion, which could not be scheduled until I was already on my way in a car. This led to a surreal scene on the Long Island Expressway. Asked to call the White House on Friday afternoon, October 13, I found myself at the appointed hour trapped in heavy traffic with my family on the Long Island Expressway. The White House switchboard told me not to use a cellular phone for a conversation with the President. I called back from a service-station pay phone, and was connected immediately to Christopher, Lake, and Berger. With the deafening sound of truck traffic in the background, we chatted as we waited for the President to join the call. Two men in a pickup truck drove over, and after a short wait made it clear that in their view my time at the pay phone was up. Their cigarette packs were lodged inside the sleeves of their T-shirts, James Dean-style, and they looked increasingly annoyed. I imagined the headlines in the tabloids if I told them the truth: "Man Attacked in LIE Phone Booth; Claimed He Was Talking to Prez."

Finally, as we waited impatiently, the President came on the line, asking me where I was. "You won't believe it, Mr. President," I said, in a low voice. "Is this the envoy to *The Washington Post*?" he asked with amusement, referring to a favorable editorial a week earlier. "How do you get such an article?" he continued. "I can't get them to say anything nice about me." I replied that the editorial had not been all *that* laudatory, and that it came after "eighteen straight hits on me." "Don't complain," the President laughed. "You won't get many of those."

"Can we get a united Sarajevo?" he asked. "Could we protect it?" "The Serbs want a Berlin with guns," I said. "The two sides have incompatible positions on four or five key issues. Everyone knows that only a peace settlement will bring U.S. involvement. They can't have one without the other."

Areas of Control After Cease-fire, October 12, 1995



"That's good," the President said. "It's the only dog we've got. Let's use it." The President was particularly concerned about Yeltsin's support for the peace effort, and spoke with passion about the need to involve Russia in the peacekeeping force.

"We want the Russians in," I said. "But they cannot have their own sector. It would look like a Russian zone of occupation after World War II. Secondly, they cannot have any say in NATO decisions to use force, which they are seeking through some kind of council."

"We should try to involve Russia," the President replied. "It's important. And good luck on your trip."

Moscow. After a short stop in Paris to see Chirac, we landed in Moscow. The Russians were pleased at their first opportunity to act as host for the Contact Group. But the meetings, held at the Foreign Ministry, were confused and shapeless; the Russians, not used to running international meetings, had no set agenda. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, an affable and decent man, but under pressure from the nationalists in Russia, chaired the opening session.

The French representative, Jacques Blot, announced that it had been "unanimously decided" that Carl Bildt would be the senior civilian representative in Bosnia. Since we had already agreed that the civilian chief would be a European, I agreed to this suggestion despite the odd manner in which it had been sprung on us. To do otherwise would have opened a wide breach within the Contact Group. Besides, we could work with Bildt, whom we had strongly supported in early 1995 as E.U. negotiator.

Kozyrev suggested that the three Balkan Presidents visit Moscow prior to Dayton. His main purpose was to enhance the prestige of the Yeltsin government on the eve of the election for the Russian parliament, or Duma. The Russians promised that if we agreed to this meeting, they would restrict it to a "photo op" with Yeltsin.

I had doubts about this proposal. It risked derailing or delaying the negotiating process, notwithstanding the Russian pledge to stay away from substance. Scheduling would be difficult. It seemed unlikely that the meeting would have much impact on Duma elections. However, I knew Strobe would favor such a trip, and given our recent conversation I assumed President Clinton would also support it—so I told the Russians that Strobe would address it when he arrived in Moscow the next day.

That afternoon I went to the airport to meet him and his team, which included Slocombe and James Collins, the head of State's office for relations with the former Soviet republics.* We headed straight to the Russian Defense Ministry, where we met with a group of grim and skeptical-looking Russian

* Collins succeeded Pickering as Ambassador to Russia in 1997.

generals. They listened coldly to Strobe and Walt but seemed more receptive when American military officers spoke, especially Wes Clark; with his crisp military bearing and handsome uniform, he seemed to communicate to the Russians soldier-to-soldier, in a manner that we civilians could not match. When our team left for Belgrade the next day, Strobe asked us to leave Wes behind to participate in their discussions.

In order to join the Bosnia force, the Russians said, they needed joint authority over all decisions. Briefing the NATO Council in Brussels on October 18, Strobe predicted that Yeltsin would "reserve for himself the final say on what has been an extremely contentious issue." This meant the decision would not be made until the Clinton-Yeltsin summit, scheduled for Hyde Park, New York, on October 23.

Congress—and the Twelve-Month Limit. On October 17, Christopher, Perry, and Shalikashvili ran into difficulty during an unusual joint appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Democrats joined Republicans in warning that the Administration had not yet made a convincing argument for deploying American troops in Bosnia.

Like most Americans, affected by endless images on television of U.N. forces killed and wounded in appalling conditions in Bosnia, Congress assumed that American troops would also suffer casualties. This expectation shaped the debate over the next few weeks. Had the public understood that Americans would be sent to Bosnia only in a radically different environment from the one they had seen on television, one that sharply reduced the risk of casualties, there would have been more support for the effort. It was virtually impossible to make the case in the absence of a peace agreement, but Congress demanded that the debate begin *before* the negotiations at Dayton.

Trying to bolster support, Perry told the Armed Services Committee that the NATO force in Bosnia would be "the biggest and the toughest and the meanest dog in town," adding that if it were attacked, "it would bring a large hammer down on them immediately." Still, the Senators were skeptical. "We haven't made the case yet," Christopher said, "but there's a case to be made and we'll make it."

Two issues dominated the hearing. First, would the Administration submit any decision to deploy troops to Bosnia to a formal vote of the Congress and would it respect the outcome of that vote? Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia spoke for most of his colleagues in a letter to President Clinton that called for "the Congressional majority [to] share full responsibility, from the outset, for any decision to accept the costs and risks of this proposed operation." Other Senators, including John Glenn, Dan Coats, Kay Bailey Hutchison, and William S. Cohen all pursued this same line.

Christopher and Perry had prepared carefully for this. Though they said they would "welcome an authorization from the Congress," they refused to answer repeated questions as to whether or not they would recommend that the President seek such authority and be bound by a vote.

The second issue was fundamental: how long would American and NATO troops be deployed in Bosnia? Although the NATO plan had not yet been formally approved by the President, Perry and Shalikashvili told the Senators NATO would "complete its mission in twelve months and [then] withdraw."

The plausibility of this statement, even when slightly softened by the President a few days later, was widely questioned at the time—and would cause serious difficulty for the Administration later. It resulted from the deeply held conviction of the Pentagon and the NSC that the American people would not support involvement in Bosnia without an "exit strategy." There was merit to this theory, as all students of Vietnam and Somalia knew. Nevertheless, announcing *before the peace talks began* that we would withdraw in twelve months, no matter what happened on the ground, was not an "exit strategy," but an exit deadline—something quite different, and quite misleading.

The negotiating team knew that one year was not sufficient to succeed, no matter what happened in Dayton. But we were traveling between Moscow and Belgrade on the day this issue was decided, and after stating once in an earlier discussion that an arbitrary deadline—especially one so unrealistic—was a terrible idea, we were not consulted again. When we heard the news, we feared it would weaken our negotiating hand as well as threaten successful implementation. But the decision had been made, and we had no choice but to defend it publicly.

A Final Systems Check in the Balkans. As Washington announced its decision on the troop commitment, we began our "final systems check," visiting all three Balkan capitals. As a display of Contact Group unity, I asked Bildt and Ivanov to travel with us. It was the only joint trip of the three Dayton co-chairmen, and gave us a chance to develop closer working relationships.

It had been almost two weeks since we had seen Milosevic. He began the October 17 meeting with a strong effort to get the sanctions lifted or suspended prior to Dayton. We rejected his request. John Shattuck had called from the Bosnian town of Zenica that same day to report that several thousand Muslim refugees had been driven toward central Bosnia by paramilitary Serb units, perhaps led by Arkan. At the same time, we had received intelligence reports of continued Yugoslav resupply to the Bosnian Serb Army, despite many assurances from Milosevic to the contrary.

Milosevic waved off Shattuck's information. Was the Serbian President lying about what was going on, or was he so isolated that he did not know

what his own forces were doing? We did not know, but since he consistently claimed to be uninformed about what was happening in the Banja Luka area, I asked the CIA to prepare a "sanitized" (or unclassified) document that laid out evidence of the ties between Arkan and the Yugoslav Army. We planned to give the document to Milosevic on a second trip to Belgrade on October 19, after Bildt and Ivanov had left. Although the document did not link Arkan directly to the recent events, it was powerful and incriminating.

When I raised the subject again at lunch on October 19, Milosevic tried to brush it off. "No, no, no," he said. "Your information is wrong." At this point, by prearrangement, Pardew pushed our document in front of Milosevic. "Our evidence is all in there, Mr. President," I said.

Milosevic looked away. He would not touch the paper lying directly in front of him. I urged him to read it, but he went on eating. Hill observed later that Milosevic acted as if by touching the document he would be physically connected to the charges it contained. When the meal ended, a Serb official came up to Pardew and said that he had left *his* paper on the table. "No, I didn't forget it," Jim said. "It belongs to President Milosevic."

Hyde Park. On October 23, a gorgeous fall day, a frail Boris Yeltsin met President Clinton at Franklin Roosevelt's home at Hyde Park high above the Hudson. Jim Collins had suggested the beautiful setting in the hope that its reminders of FDR's great wartime alliance with the Soviet Union would encourage a new security relationship, beginning in Bosnia. In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly the previous day, Yeltsin had delivered a blistering attack against NATO expansion and indicated that Russia would not participate in any force under NATO command in Bosnia.

The President's goal was to get Yeltsin to agree to participate in a Bosnia peacekeeping force even if the Russians continued to object to NATO enlargement, on the theory that what we did together in the Balkans would become a partial antidote to Russia's neuralgia about NATO and would, in Talbott's words, "lubricate the NATO-Russia track." Talbott and Perry had spent a great deal of time discussing this nuanced approach to Bosnia and NATO during their frequent trips to Geneva to see Grachev; now, with Dayton only days away, it was up to the President to pull at least the first track—Bosnia—across the finish line while holding firm on NATO.

The President succeeded brilliantly. After hours of intense and often highly personal discussion, the two men agreed that two battalions of Russian troops, totaling about two thousand soldiers, would participate in the force in Bosnia. President Clinton defended the integrity of the Bosnia command structure—a sacred "red line" for NATO, which would rather have a command without the Russians than the kind of messy structure, with separate chains of command,

that the Russians sought. The two Presidents did not attempt to settle this complicated problem, instead handing it back to Perry and Grachev, who were scheduled to meet at the end of the week in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. But they did agree on the size and functions of the Russian contingent, and the meeting set a positive tone for Perry's closing efforts with Grachev.

One other issue concerning Bosnia came up at Hyde Park: Yeltsin's desire for a pre-Dayton summit in Moscow of the three Balkan Presidents. All three Balkan Presidents had told us they would rather not go to Moscow. From their point of view, it would be exhausting, unproductive, and politically undesirable. But Yeltsin was adamant: he did not care that none of the presidents wanted to make the trip to Moscow. Knowing that President Clinton would meet with Izetbegovic and Tudjman the next day in New York, Yeltsin asked him to use "all his influence" to make the meeting happen. Reluctantly, President Clinton agreed.

Izetbegovic and Tudjman at the Waldorf. The day after Hyde Park, October 24, President Clinton met Izetbegovic and Tudjman together at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. Seeking to put the Dayton talks in a larger framework, the President began on a high note. "We have seen things in the last few years that we never expected to see," he said. "Israel and the PLO sitting down after thirty years of fighting; the IRA laying down their arms. But what the world wants most is the end of the war in Bosnia." The President praised the Muslim-Croat Federation as essential. "Without the Federation," he said, "I am not sure that the NATO bombing or Dick Holbrooke's diplomacy would have worked."

Seated on both sides of President Clinton, the two Presidents barely acknowledged his point. Rather, Izetbegovic immediately complained about the Croats. "All parties here support the Federation in words," he said, "but the process of implementation has not taken place as it should." He then listed areas in which the Croats had failed to live up to their commitments. Tudjman ignored Izetbegovic, and made another strong pitch that eastern Slavonia had to be part of any deal at Dayton. The President agreed. Then the two men took a few more shots at each other, and the meeting ended. Its main value was that it had given the President and his senior advisors a rare first-hand sense of how much these two men disliked each other, and how difficult Dayton would be.

With the formal meeting over, President Clinton asked me and Sandy Vershbow to join him and the two Presidents in a corner. "I want to ask you to do something for the peace process that I know will be hard on both of you," he said to Izetbegovic and Tudjman. "I want to ask you both to go to Moscow before Dayton. It would be better to get the Moscow visit over with before the

Duma elections, and that means before Dayton." The main purpose of the meeting, President Clinton concluded, would be to allow Yeltsin "to send a signal to the Serbs, and to allow the Russian people to see that he is part of the process." Despite their previous misgivings, Izetbegovic and Tudjman agreed immediately. To ease the physical strain on Izetbegovic, President Clinton offered an American plane for the trip; Tudjman had his own plane.

The pre-Dayton Moscow summit, which would delay the start of Dayton by one day, was announced by the Russians and confirmed by the White House on October 25. Two days later, on October 27, Perry and Grachev agreed to put two thousand Russian troops directly under General Joulwan.

This arrangement told a great deal about the complicated mind-set of the Russians in the fourth year of the post-Soviet era. The great World War II alliance of Americans and Russians still echoed in the minds of the Russian military. Having regarded themselves as our only "fellow superpower" for fifty years, they seemed to be ready to accept the U.S. military as a worthy superior or commander in Bosnia. The negotiations over Russia's role in Bosnia thus helped us understand how to approach the next big strategic goal of America's post-Cold War European policy—enlarging NATO.

This was a historic achievement. From the patient negotiating style of Perry and Talbott, strongly supported by General Joulwan, had come an unprecedented command arrangement: for the first time since World War II, U.S. and Russian troops would operate in a unified command. Even Strobe was surprised at the speed with which everything fell into place on the eve of Dayton. "The Russians were unbelievably sanguine about being under American command in Bosnia," he observed later—"but NATO was still a four-letter word in Moscow."

But the same day brought stunning news that temporarily overshadowed the agreement between Perry and Grachev. For the second time in three months, Yeltsin entered the hospital with severe heart disease. Ambassador Pickering predicted that the country was entering a period of crisis and uncertainty. There was, however, a small plus from this frightening development: the pre-Dayton Moscow summit was canceled. As Chris Hill said, "If Yeltsin *had* to get sick, at least he picked a good time from our standpoint." Still, we all knew that a great deal depended on his speedy recovery.