

The Longest Weekend

(September 1-4)

The historian must . . . constantly put himself at a point in the past at which the known factors will seem to permit different outcomes. If he speaks of Salamis, then it must be as if the Persians might still win; if he speaks of the coup d'état of Brumaire, then it must remain to be seen if Bonaparte will be ignominiously repulsed.

—JOHAN HUIZINGA

OUR DIPLOMATIC SHUTTLE REACHED NEW INTENSITY. With a travel schedule that changed every few hours, we moved so unpredictably across Europe that Washington often did not know where we were. Driven by the bombing and by the sense that it was now all or nothing, we felt ready to take on almost any challenge—so much so that in the midst of the Bosnia shuttle, we took on an additional, related problem: the two-year-old crisis between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where five hundred American troops were deployed to prevent hostilities.

It hardly dawned on us that the Labor Day holiday was starting in the United States. Our own weekend would take us to Belgrade, Bonn, Brussels, Geneva, Zagreb, Belgrade, Athens, Skopje (the capital of Macedonia), Ankara, and back for a third time to Belgrade. During those four days we would:

- arrange and announce the first high-level meeting among the three warring parties in two years;
- meet our Contact Group colleagues (and a half-dozen Central European heads of government) in Bonn;
- spend most of a night at NATO headquarters in Brussels arguing for the resumption of the bombing;
- meet representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Geneva to get Muslim support for our efforts;

- negotiate a draft agreement with Milosevic and Izetbegovic for the high-level meeting—the first such agreement that would ever hold;
- resolve the dangerous situation between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- plead for the resumption of the bombing, while holding off another invitation to Jimmy Carter to step into the negotiations.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

NATO suspended its bombing in Bosnia at 5:00 A.M. on Friday, September 1. I had told Washington we would support a short halt so that the U.N. commander, General Bernard Janvier, could negotiate with Mladic—but only if the pause would end promptly if the Bosnian Serbs did not agree to lift the siege of Sarajevo. With considerable prescience, Hill and Pardew warned that my position could cause a serious problem: it would be hard to resume the bombing once it was stopped, they feared, because the U.N. and some Europeans would try to prevent its resumption no matter what the circumstances. As if to prove Hill and Pardew right, U.N. headquarters in Zagreb, hiding its own desire for a total bombing halt behind our highly conditional support for a brief pause, told the press that the pause was at our request, a line that prompted a strong criticism of us by *New York Times* columnist William Safire.

The afternoon before the bombing halt began, we met General Janvier in his headquarters in Zagreb. Janvier, a small, unhappy-looking man, gave the impression that he wished he were somewhere else, and politely offered evasive nonresponses. He was clearly waiting for us to disappear, as had so many other negotiators in the previous three years, so that he could get on with his work. His demeanor suggested that he thought he could negotiate successfully with Mladic if only we would leave him alone.

Milosevic received us at Dobanovci, one of the many hunting lodges Tito had maintained around the country. About thirty minutes from downtown Belgrade, it was a collection of modest buildings set among large fields and forests, on the edge of a lake, not as fancy as Tito's more fabled retreats. We sat at a long table outside the main house, eating and drinking almost continually. Milosevic had added to his entourage Nikola Koljevic, a short, plump, and hard-drinking Shakespeare scholar who had taught English literature in Michigan. Koljevic held the title of "Vice President of Republika Srpska," but he was not trusted by the hard mountain men of Pale, the leaders of the Bosnian Serb movement, who viewed him as a Milosevic stooge. Koljevic liked to quote the Bard selectively to support his positions, frequently making state-

ments like "The quality of mercy is not strained" or "The fault, dear Brutus . . ." Trying to keep even in the Shakespeare contest, I would offer up half-remembered phrases such as "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war" or "There is a tide in the affairs of men."

The meeting at the hunting lodge rambled on for twelve hours, with a break during which we returned to our hotel for a short press conference. Milosevic had changed the venue in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere. There was heavy drinking for much of the day, which clearly affected Koljevic, but I saw no evidence—then or later—that the alcohol affected Milosevic's judgments. The Americans drank little, and I began a policy of accepting Milosevic's frequent offers of drinks only when we reached agreements.

Jim Pardew later called it the day of "bonding with the godfather." Milosevic could switch moods with astonishing speed, perhaps to keep others off balance. He could range from charm to brutality, from emotional outbursts to calm discussions of legal minutiae. When he was angry, his face wrinkled up, but he could regain control of himself instantly.

Near the beginning of the meeting, I suggested that we take a walk, accompanied only by General Clark. As he led us through the woods and fields behind the hunting lodge, he talked with nostalgia about his trips to New York as a banker—"I want to smell that wonderful New York air again," he said, and he seemed to be serious. He described his career as a successful Yugoslav businessman during the late Tito era, and, for the first time, he talked to us about the need for regional economic cooperation, ignoring his own central role in the destruction of Yugoslavia. When we returned to the villa, we asked him about his famous 1989 speech at Kosovo that ignited Serb extremism. He vigorously denied that this was his intent, and repeated his accusation that Ambassador Zimmermann had sought to turn international opinion against him by organizing a diplomatic boycott of the speech. But Milosevic made an interesting admission: "I was wrong not to meet with Ambassador Zimmermann for so long," he said. "I was angry at him, but I should not have waited a year." Chris Hill, who knew the history in detail, defended Zimmermann and reminded Milosevic that the speech had been inflammatory by any standards.

Over the lunch table, I proposed that the three Foreign Ministers meet in a week to start the peace process. Milosevic agreed instantly, and asked only that the United States, not the full Contact Group, be in charge. He would leave all details of location and timing to us. He criticized the Russians, saying that they presumed to a far greater influence in Serbia, based on historic Slav-Serb ties, than was justified. He was scornful of Moscow's attempts to pressure or bribe the Serbs with aid—"tons of rotten meat, and crap like that," he said. Since the Russians were his strongest supporters within the Contact Group, this was obviously said, at least in part, to have an effect on us.

Using a secure telephone system Clark had set up on the veranda of the lodge, I called Talbott and told him that we had a "little surprise" for Washington: all three countries had agreed to send their Foreign Ministers to Geneva in about a week for a U.S.-sponsored meeting. It would be the first meeting at such a high level in over two years. We asked him to get the British, French, Germans, and Russians on board immediately so that the meeting could be announced in four hours. Strobe was completely supportive, and said he would call us back as soon as he could.

Four hours is normally far too little time to coordinate such a complicated matter. But Strobe and John Kornblum, working frantically, accomplished it on schedule. Calling dozens of other Washington officials and the many foreign leaders, they gained rapid agreement from London, Paris, Moscow, Bonn, and the E.U.'s Carl Bildt for the Geneva meeting. Just over two hours later, as we sat anxiously on the patio outside Belgrade, Strobe called back with a characteristic opening line: "All set, pal. Everyone is on board." His dedicated executive assistant, Victoria Nuland, later told me it was the most satisfying day she had ever spent in public service, "because we worked together as a team and everything went off like clockwork on a big issue."

I had told Strobe that the Geneva meeting should be chaired by Secretary of State Christopher. He had discussed this with both Christopher and Donilon before calling back. Their reply surprised me. "The Secretary wants you to run the Geneva meeting," he said. "He has other matters to take care of. Besides, if he comes, the other Contact Group Foreign Ministers will insist on participating, and with all the grandstanding it could become hard to focus on the main event."

Government offers small moments like this, whose full import one realizes only later. Few Secretaries of State would have given up the chance to chair such a meeting. But it was characteristic of Warren Christopher, who firmly believed in delegating both authority and responsibility downward to key subordinates, provided they operated within established policy guidelines.

Nick Burns made the first announcement in Washington. A few minutes later, we made a short press appearance at the Hyatt in Belgrade. Our greatest regret, I began, was that Bob, Joe, and Nelson, to whom we had dedicated our shuttle effort, could not be with us for this announcement.

After the press conference, we returned to the villa. Milosevic's Foreign Minister, Milan Milutinovic, was openly fearful about the Geneva meeting. Pulling me aside during one of our many breaks, Milutinovic—smooth, affable, beautifully dressed, at ease in the language and style of international diplomacy, with its elaborate circumlocutions and nonconfrontational evasions—had just become Foreign Minister, and said he could lose his job ("Even my head," he joked weakly) if anything went wrong. Everything, he said, had to be "one hundred percent" agreed upon before we got to Geneva;

once there he would have no authority or flexibility. "The Master," he said, gesturing toward Milosevic, "will pull all the strings."

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

We flew to Bonn in the morning for a Contact Group meeting and an international conference on the future of Central Europe. The meeting and the conference both took place in Germany's state guest house at Petersburg, high on a hill above the Rhine overlooking the German capital, in the same rooms in which I had first met Chancellor Kohl.*

The Europeans. Carl Bildt was enthusiastic about the idea of the Geneva meeting, which he would co-chair. Although the selection of a Swede as the chief European negotiator, replacing Lord David Owen, carried no special meaning to most Americans, in Bildt's native land there was high symbolism in the selection of one of their countrymen (especially a former Prime Minister) to represent the European Union only a few months after Sweden had formally ended over 150 years of determined neutrality by joining the E.U. Bildt's selection had been the result, in large part, of our suggestions; even during our frequent arguments, a result of the pressures we faced, Bildt and I remained close friends. Tall, elegant, and witty, Bildt was to play an important role over the next two years before returning to Swedish politics. We had an unusual relationship for two diplomats—quite the reverse of the normal pattern in international diplomacy of outward cordiality masking animosity: we argued often but remained good friends, and made a productive team.

Everyone supported the Geneva meeting, but some of the Europeans were irritated because we had acted first and informed them later. This was particularly true of Pauline Neville-Jones of Great Britain, one of the most forceful people in the Contact Group. Strong-willed and dedicated to her work, she placed enormous importance on proper procedures, and vividly expressed her unhappiness that we had arranged the Foreign Ministers meeting without getting prior approval from the Contact Group. She and her German and French counterparts also said the meeting should be held in a U.N. building, rather than at the American Mission in Geneva. However, the Russian Contact Group representative, Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, accepted an American venue immediately—on the condition that the next meeting be hosted by his government.

* I also met privately with leaders from Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia on NATO enlargement. The most difficult session was with the authoritarian Prime Minister of Slovakia, Vladimir Meciar. Two years later, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were invited to join NATO, but Slovakia was left behind because it still restricted internal freedoms.

Such arguments over the location and "hosting" of meetings may seem comical, but they were a constant and time-consuming subplot of the negotiations. In fact, disagreements over substance were rarely as intense as those concerning procedure and protocol. These minidramas had relatively little to do with Bosnia, but were a manifestation of the confusion within the European Union over how to forge a common foreign policy position. From a procedural point of view, Pauline Neville-Jones certainly had a point. However, as I had written Christopher ten days earlier, if we consulted the Contact Group prior to each action, it would be impossible for the negotiations to proceed, let alone succeed. Now that the United States was finally engaged in Bosnia, we could not allow internal Contact Group squabbles to deflect us.

The Russians. That day, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev demanded publicly that Russia be made the third co-chair of the Geneva meeting. If Moscow secured an active role in the negotiations, it could cause a serious problem, given its pro-Serb attitude. But we felt that Moscow's primary goal was neither to run nor to wreck the negotiations. Rather, what it wanted most was to restore a sense, however symbolic, that they still mattered in the world. Strobe Talbott sometimes called this "the Rodney Dangerfield syndrome"; the Russians felt they "got no respect" anymore, and looked for ways to be seen as one of the "big boys." We felt that, despite occasional mischief making, Moscow would be easier to deal with if we gave it a place co-equal with the E.U. and the United States as a co-chair of the Geneva meeting than if we tried to downgrade it.

Meshing overall policy toward Russia with the search for peace in Bosnia was never simple. We spent much time calibrating and recalibrating our activities to promote both objectives simultaneously. In the end the effort succeeded, and produced, among other things, a historic arrangement that put Russian soldiers under an American commander in Bosnia.*

Behind our efforts to include Russia in the Bosnia negotiating process lay a fundamental belief on the part of the Clinton Administration that it was essential to find the proper place for Russia in Europe's security structure, something it had not been part of since 1914. There was a constant power struggle in Moscow between old-style officials who had served the communists—the so-called *nomenklatura*—and a newer, post-Soviet leadership that was just starting to emerge. The United States sought to encourage the latter. Sticking to this policy in the face of the 1993 coup attempt, the war in Chechnya, Boris Yeltsin's uncertain health, and officially sanctioned corruption took patience and determination, particularly because of constant attacks on the policy by

* See chapters 14 and 15.

American conservatives, who unfairly attacked the Administration, and especially Strobe Talbott, for being "soft on Russians."

As we left Bonn, a remarkable but invisible drama was playing itself out over whether or not to resume the bombing. Some U.N. and NATO commanders hoped to avoid resumption no matter what the outcome of the Mladic-Janvier talks. This was particularly true of General Janvier himself and, surprisingly, Admiral Leighton Smith, the commander of NATO's southern forces and Commander in Chief of all United States naval forces in Europe. Even though he carried out his assignment with precision and skill, Smith did not like the bombing; using the same phrase that Secretary of State James Baker had made famous four years earlier, Smith told me he did not have a "dog in this fight."

General Clark, on the other hand, believed the bombing should resume. This put him in a difficult position. For a three-star general to make unwelcome suggestions to men with four stars on their shoulders was not normally a wise career move, but after Mount Igman Clark was committed. As the personal representative of the Chairman of the JCS, he had the authority to make suggestions—but only suggestions—to senior officers, and report directly to General Shalikashvili. This awkward situation came to a head on Saturday afternoon, September 2, in an Embassy car on the Cologne airfield as Clark and I were about to board our plane to Brussels. As Clark explained to Smith why the bombing might have to resume, I could tell by the noises emanating from Clark's cell phone that he was being scolded by a very angry, very senior American naval commander. Genuinely worried about Clark's future, I grabbed the phone from his hands and told Smith that if Mladic did not comply with our demands on Sarajevo within the next few hours, I would insist on the resumption of the bombing. Smith, fuming at Clark, remained unconvinced.

In my view, Smith was edging into an area of political judgments that should have been reserved for civilian leaders. But Smith saw it differently: he told me that he was "solely responsible" for the safety and well-being of his forces, and he would make his decision, under authority delegated to him by the NATO Council, based on his own judgment. In fact, he pointed out, he did not even work for the United States; as a NATO commander he took orders from Brussels.

Clark and Smith never got along well after that telephone call. To ensure that no damage would be done to Clark's career, Strobe, Sandy Berger, and I all talked to General Shalikashvili. When, a year later, Clark received his fourth star and became Commander in Chief of the United States Southern Command in Panama, General Shalikashvili told me that Clark's performance in Bosnia had, in the end, been the key factor in his promotion. In 1997, Clark

was chosen as Supreme Commander of NATO, succeeding General Joulwan. Ironically, the very thing that had once threatened his career, his service with the negotiating team, proved to be crucial to the assignment of a lifetime.

Problems such as these are not uncommon between the military and civilians in the government. I disagreed with Smith on this issue, but, as the person directly responsible for the safety of the NATO forces, his position was entirely rational. One must never forget in such circumstances what is at stake: the lives of young men and women. The wrong decision could send his men to their death or capture, as had happened in Somalia less than two years earlier. On the other hand, other lives were also at stake: those of the United Nations peacekeepers, over one hundred of whom had already been killed, and countless civilians on all sides. If negotiations failed, the war would continue—and even more United Nations troops might die while American leadership in Europe continued to decline.

At the NATO Council. With the friction between our delegation and Admiral Smith rising, we moved on to NATO headquarters in Brussels. As we arrived, confusion reigned: People milled around Secretary-General Claes's offices as he talked by phone to his military commanders, trying to find out how General Janvier's talks with General Mladic had gone. General Joulwan had been ready to support a resumption of the bombing, but had been pulled up short by Admiral Smith, who had already called to complain about Clark.

The bombing pause was now thirty-six hours old. I felt that the bombing should resume after no more than seventy-two hours unless Mladic accepted every detail of the conditions for the relief of Sarajevo, which was unlikely. But at NATO headquarters, many Ambassadors did not wish to resume the bombing.

By chance, the NATO Council was about to debate the issue when we arrived. Claes and Joulwan asked me to delay our departure in order to convey our views directly to them. We agreed immediately.

The Council convened in the early evening. After Ambassador Hunter made some introductory remarks, I said we confronted in its purest form "a classic dilemma in political-military relations, one we faced but never solved in Vietnam: the relationship between the use of force and diplomacy. The NATO decision to bomb was necessary, given the provocation. It is now essential to establish that we are negotiating from a position of strength. . . . If the air strikes resume and hurt the negotiations, so be it."

The questioning from the NATO Ambassadors continued for hours. As the clock passed midnight, Clark and I moved to a conference room and talked first to Admiral Smith, then at length with the White House, where Talbott, Berger, Admiral Owens, Sandy Vershbow (the NSC's senior European hand),

and Slocombe were tracking both the NATO debate and the talks between Janvier and Mladic. The news from Bosnia was shocking, but not surprising: Janvier had received an insolent proposal from Mladic—and publicly deemed it acceptable. He was immediately supported by Admiral Smith. “Our dilemma,” Berger said, “is that Janvier and Smith have accepted a bad proposal from Mladic. He has played them for fools.” We told Washington that while Smith did not want to resume the bombing, he would if ordered to by NATO. Berger and Talbott called Joulwan, Smith, and Claes to press for action.

With the NATO Ambassadors locked in a hopeless bureaucratic deadlock, NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes came through for the second time in a week, ruling on his own authority that a new NATO Council decision was not needed to resume the bombing. Claes’s contribution during this week was hardly recognized at the time, and virtually forgotten within weeks, as he faced a personal scandal that forced him from the top NATO job. A Flemish Socialist and former Belgian Foreign Minister, Claes was best known as an amateur orchestra leader, a pursuit his critics used as a metaphor for his reputation as a weak man given to searching for a consensus at all costs. Our Ambassador in Belgium, Allan Blinken, had assured us this was not true, and predicted that Claes would surprise us. Blinken was right. Before Claes was forced to resign as NATO Secretary-General because of charges that he and his party had received bribes from a helicopter company—allegations that, two years later, had still not received a full and proper judicial hearing—he made a major contribution to a historic new policy.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Our team split up. Sending most of my colleagues to Zagreb to see Tudjman, I flew to Geneva to meet with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which had long felt its pro-Bosnian positions had been ignored by the West. We met at the American Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, where our Ambassador, Daniel Spiegel, deftly led me through the meetings. The presence of the Ambassador from Iran, whom I ignored, made the meeting somewhat strained, but I was pleased to hear strong support from several nations, notably our NATO ally Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia. I had complete trust in Spiegel, who had been an assistant to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance during the Carter years and had then become a lawyer in Washington, and turned over to him the delicate task of arranging the logistics for the Foreign Ministers meeting, which was only five days away.

Early Sunday morning, Vice President Gore called Izetbegovic to say that the United States did not believe that the pause should continue. His call was de-

signed to reassure an increasingly disturbed Izetbegovic that we were not abandoning him, while we continued to fight for a resumption of the bombing. Meanwhile, I flew from Geneva to Belgrade, where my colleagues had already begun a meeting with Milosevic. Owen and Hill had produced a short set of "Joint Agreed Principles" for Geneva. We used as our starting point the Contact Group plan of 1994, which divided the country into two "entities," giving the Croat-Muslim Federation 51 percent and the Serbs 49 percent of the land. Our long negotiating session, accompanied by a meal consisting of various kinds of lamb and sausages, ended with partial agreement on a draft we would discuss with Izetbegovic, who was visiting Turkey, the next day. By the time we returned to our hotel, called Washington, and went to sleep it was 4:00 A.M. Our colleagues in Washington were still struggling to get the bombing resumed.

Jimmy Carter. Early Sunday morning in Washington, at about the same time as my meeting in Geneva with the Islamic representatives, Talbott received a call from Jimmy Carter. In an effort to head off a resumption of the bombing, Radovan Karadzic had reached out again to Carter. Using as his channel a Serbian-American plastic surgeon from Beverly Hills who knew the Carters well, Karadzic said that he would stop the attacks on Sarajevo in return for a United Nations guarantee of the safety of the Bosnian Serb Army. It was a difficult situation for Strobe, one of the most polite people in Washington, and always respectful of the former President, whose administration he had covered as a journalist. But, determined to protect the negotiations, he told Carter that the Karadzic channel had to be shut down at least until our efforts were given a fair test. The Administration, Strobe told Carter, would not accept any offer from Karadzic, no matter what it was. Carter was not happy; a CNN camera crew was already standing by outside his office, and he had hoped to announce that he had reached an agreement with Karadzic. After several difficult talks with Strobe, he agreed to hold off.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4: THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

It was Labor Day in America, and we were starting the longest day of the entire shuttle. The battle over resumption of the bombing was still unresolved. We did not have an agreed text for Geneva yet, and to discuss it with Izetbegovic we had to follow him to Ankara, Turkey, where he was making an official visit. But on our way to Turkey we decided to take a side trip to Athens and Skopje to tackle the bitter dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) over the name of the country and its national flag.

The world's press tended to treat this as a comic issue. But to the two countries, the name and the flag of the new country were serious, and Washington and Western Europe feared that the tiny landlocked country would be the next flash point in the Balkans.

FYROM had explosive problems with all its neighbors—almost 30 percent of its population was Albanian, its language was virtually identical to Bulgarian, and, since it was supporting the economic sanctions against Serbia, relations along that border were also tense. The most threatening situation was to its south, with Athens, which felt that the new country posed a direct threat to Greece's very identity by attempting to co-opt Hellenic culture and a sacred name. Greece felt that by calling itself the "Republic of Macedonia," the government in Skopje was trying to create the basis for a future annexation not only of Greek culture and history but perhaps even parts of Greece's northernmost province, which had always been known as Macedonia. To the people of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, however, the name and the flag defined the identity of a new state carved—like Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—out of the old Yugoslavia. The new country added to the tensions by adopting an ancient Greek symbol, the sixteen-point Star of Vergina on the tomb of Philip of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great), as the central motif of its national flag.

In February 1994, Greece imposed an economic blockade on the new country to its north, crippling its economy, which had already been hurt by its support for the sanctions against Serbia. The situation was so explosive that the United States made its only exception to the policy of not sending troops to the region, and sent 550 American soldiers to FYROM on a United Nations peacekeeping mission in order to prevent the war in Bosnia from spreading to the south and igniting a general Balkan conflict.

For more than two years, two tenacious negotiators had worked side by side to resolve the dispute: Cyrus Vance, representing the United Nations, and Matthew Nimetz, a New York lawyer who had served as Counselor to Secretary Vance during the Carter Administration, as the American negotiator. Inching through the maze of complex issues, they had come within sight of ending the dispute several times, only to see one or both sides back away from the final concessions required for settlement.

The idea that we try to settle this issue came from Chris Hill and Marshall Adair, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State who covered Greece and Turkey. They suggested that we fly to Athens and Skopje to see if we could use the momentum of the Bosnian shuttle to end the dispute. We were greatly encouraged in this risky venture by the advice of Greece's Ambassador in Washington, Loucas Tsilas, who urged us to try for a breakthrough.

Hill and Pardew flew to Skopje in secret on September 1 to see President Kiro Gligorov. They returned with an upbeat report. "When I learned that you

were coming today, I decided that now is the right time for an agreement," President Gligorov told them. He said he was ready to drop his long-standing insistence that the Greeks agree to end the embargo before the two sides sat down for a final agreement.

Greece was the member of NATO and the E.U. with the most positive feelings toward Belgrade—primarily because of a common religious heritage—and Milosevic had been careful not to alienate Athens by recognizing Macedonia. He predicted that no agreement between Athens and Skopje was possible in the foreseeable future. As he spoke, I privately hoped we would stun him with a breakthrough. We did not tell him we were going to Skopje.

We landed in Athens late on the morning of September 4. As our cars maneuvered through the crowded streets with the help of a sizable police escort, Chris Hill and the acting Ambassador, Tom Miller, wrote out by hand a short announcement that we hoped the two sides would make later that day. At the Greek Foreign Ministry, our first stop, an unruly group of journalists knocked one another down, shoved tape recorders into our faces, and backed into glass doors as we entered. Once behind closed doors, we found Greek Foreign Minister Karolas Papoulias openly hostile to any movement. He neither believed that Gligorov was ready to make a move, nor did he care. "You can never trust those people," he said. "Never."

Discouraged, we drove to the so-called Pink Villa, the luxurious new home of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou in the suburbs north of Athens. The gardens were still unfinished, and the house had provoked controversy because of its opulence, but Papandreou did not care: he had built it as a present for his young new wife, Dimitra, whom he had married in 1989 after a long public affair that had led to a bitter breakup with his American wife, Margaret.

Papandreou was nowhere to be seen when we arrived. Instead, we were met by Mrs. Papandreou, who was wearing an almost transparent silk pajama suit that barely concealed important parts of her impressive anatomy. Greeting us warmly, she apologized for her husband's delay, and promised he would see us shortly. Mrs. Papandreou had a reputation as a sort of Greek Imelda Marcos. Whatever the truth about her past, I had previously observed the genuine tenderness that existed between her and her aged, frail husband. I knew she would not sit in on the meeting itself, but would have great influence on him. Taking her aside, I said we were carrying a message from Gligorov that offered her husband a unique opportunity to make history. If we achieved a breakthrough, it would greatly enhance the chances for peace in Bosnia. The new Mrs. Papandreou was highly controversial, and given her costume it was easy to see why, but I felt that she had her husband's best interests at heart and understood my message. She showed no interest in the details of the issue, but seemed focused on her husband's welfare and his place in history.

The word "legendary" is much overused, but it certainly applies to the seventy-six-year-old Andreas Papandreou, whose life had encompassed so much Greek-American history. As a Greek-born American citizen, he earned a doctorate in economics from Harvard, served in the United States Navy during World War II, and then taught at Harvard, the University of Minnesota, and Berkeley (where he was chairman of the economics department). He was part of Adlai Stevenson's advisory team during his two runs for the presidency. Then he returned to Greece and fought his way into power, surviving a long period in the political wilderness after right-wing pressure forced the resignation of his father, Georgios Papandreou, in 1965, two years before the military coup. He won the prime ministership fifteen years after his father had been forced out of it, and then lost it following a series of corruption scandals—only to make another astonishing comeback, regaining it again in 1993. To conservative Americans, he was anathema, an American turncoat. To Greeks, both those who followed him and those who hated him, he was the dominant political figure of the era.

He emerged from a back room, frail and moving slowly. His hands were thin, and his handshake all bones. But his mind was alert and he was cordial as he ushered us into his study. His wife plumped up some pillows behind his head, whispered something to him, and left us alone with him, his Foreign Minister, and his diplomatic advisor, Dimitrius Karaitides.

We outlined Gligorov's new position. Unlike his Foreign Minister, Papandreou was immediately interested. But Papoulias objected. First he said that it would require the approval of the entire Cabinet. This was a phony issue, and I said so, noting that the Prime Minister seemed to agree. Finally, Papoulias turned to Hill with a gleam in his eye. "When did you last see Gligorov?" he asked. "Because if it was more than twenty-four hours ago"—Papoulias knew it had been three days earlier—"his word is worthless."

The deal we were offering did no damage to Greece's basic interests. On the contrary, it gave Athens what it wanted on the flag; removed the economic embargo, which was hurting both nations; and left open the issue of the country's name—an issue that negotiators could continue to discuss without prejudice to the position of either side.

As the Foreign Minister argued, Papandreou began to tire. Time was running out. We still had to see Gligorov in Skopje, and then meet Izetbegovic in Ankara. Papandreou seemed unable to decide. He appeared sympathetic, but no longer possessed the strength with which he had for so long dominated the Greek scene. I decided to make one last effort, addressing in highly personal terms this proud man's long and complex love-hate relationship with the United States.

"Mr. Prime Minister, you and I have something in common," I began. "We both began our involvement in American politics working for Adlai Stevenson in 1952—only I was an eleven-year-old distributing bumper stickers, and you were a senior member of Stevenson's economic team. We both grew up despising Nixon. But we must admit that it took a Nixon to go to China, and it took a Sadat to go to Jerusalem. History will remember their courage and vision. Today, Mr. Prime Minister, you can do the same thing—and at no cost to your nation's interests, only benefit. And you can start us on the road to peace in Bosnia, on the eve of the Geneva meetings. But only you can do it."

The Foreign Minister glared at us, and spoke in Greek. Trying to convey a sense of urgency, I tried one more idea that had come to mind as Papoulias warned that Gligorov's word was worthless.

"Mr. Prime Minister, your Foreign Minister does not believe you can accept the word of the leaders in Skopje. But let the United States act as the guarantor of Skopje's pledge. Let us hold Gligorov's pledge 'in escrow.' "

Papandreou looked puzzled. "You do not have to accept Gligorov's word for anything," I explained. "We will fly to Skopje now, hear Gligorov out, and call you from his office to tell you whether or not he has given his word, and whether the Americans think it is reliable. You do not need to accept anything directly from him, only from the United States."

There was a long pause. Then, in a very frail voice, the old man said, "I like you. I want to do something to help peace in Bosnia, and to help you and your country. I will trust you. Call me from Skopje, from Gligorov's office."

It was time to leave. It was clear Papoulias would try to undo our progress as soon as we left, so I asked Tom Miller to be present at the Pink Villa when we called from Skopje. Then I bade good-bye to the old man whose life had reflected every up and down in the stormy drama of U.S.-Greek relations since World War II. I saw him last standing at the door of the Pink Villa, waving weakly.

We flew to Skopje to lock up the deal, hoping to rush through the meeting and go to Ankara. But Gligorov had other ideas. Even though he had given Hill and Pardew his new offer three days earlier, now he wanted to make us sweat awhile. We were learning that renegeing on earlier offers was a basic style in the Balkans. These old men—Gligorov, like Papandreou, was in his seventies—were stubborn, but they would yield to pressure from the United States, if applied at the right moment.

Gligorov went over every detail of his earlier discussions with Hill and Pardew. Once Tito's Finance Minister, Gligorov had almost literally invented his country in late 1991 and early 1992. He wanted the embargo lifted, but would rather let his people suffer than betray what he viewed as his sacred

mission to protect his nation's identity. Finally, he yielded, and I rose hurriedly to call Papandreou. But Gligorov wanted to stretch out the process, and demanded that we eat first. A large meal of meats and Lake Ohrid trout, a famous local fish, materialized. As we ate, I excused myself and called Tom Miller at the Pink Villa. Papandreou, he said, was so excited that he had not taken his afternoon nap, and was pacing up and down anxiously waiting for the call. I told Papandreou that the deal was done, and suggested we announce it simultaneously in Washington, Athens, and Skopje. He agreed, asking only that the Americans make the announcement in all three capitals.

I called Strobe and Sandy, who were in the Situation Room, totally preoccupied with the struggle over the resumption of the NATO bombing. They hardly had time for the breakthrough on Macedonia, but suggested that I call George Stephanopoulos, the President's senior advisor, who was also the key Administration connection to the Greek-American community. When he heard the news, George's voice—normally flat, unemotional, and analytical—broke for a moment. He said he would immediately call key members of the Greek-American community, starting with Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland. I also asked him to call Papandreou directly on behalf of the President. As we ended the conversation, his voice broke again, just for a moment, and he said, "God bless you and your team. This is truly wonderful."

Nick Burns made the announcement from the State Department, while Macedonian Foreign Minister Stevo Crevenkovski and I held a short press conference outside the Presidential Palace in Skopje. At Papandreou's request, Tom Miller made a similar announcement in Athens—more evidence of the deep desire in the region to let the United States take the lead in forcing solutions to long-standing problems. We stressed the special role of Vance and Nimetz, who had labored so long on the problem. The main newspapers caught the importance of the agreement; *The New York Times*, for example, reported the end of "a four-year dispute that had threatened to break into war." There were still some unpleasant scenes a week later when the two negotiators in New York both threatened to walk away from the September 4 agreement, but the two sides signed a formal agreement resolving the flag issue and lifting the embargo. Negotiations on the name of the new country continued, but the danger of a war on Greece's northern border had disappeared.

It is often said that timing is everything. It was only later that we realized just how true this was in regard to the Greece-FYROM question. Papandreou was hospitalized in November, resigned the prime ministership in January 1996, and died on June 22. Gligorov was nearly killed in an assassination attempt on October 3, 1995. The window had closed; the deal could not have been made

even a few weeks later.* Had we not made our side trip when we did, the issue, a flash point in one of the most unstable regions of the world, might still be unsettled today. Yet as a result of the breakthrough, tensions dropped dramatically, and the economies of both countries benefited substantially. By 1998 Greece was the largest investor in Macedonia, and its second-largest trading partner.

Our intervention had demonstrated anew two central truths of the region: the United States was the only country that could force all the parties to a solution; but to do so, we had to be assertive.

By the time we reached Ankara it was 9:00 P.M., too late to meet with President Suleyman Demirel, Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, or Izetbegovic, who were already at an official dinner. We repaired to the residence of the American Ambassador, Marc Grossman, for a meal with some leading Turkish officials and businessmen. Grossman, one of the most outstanding career diplomats then serving in Europe, had foreseen the problem, and arranged for us to meet with Izetbegovic and Sacirbey after their state dinner. This meant that the long day would be even longer, but we had no choice; the negotiations for Geneva had to be completed in Ankara or we would run out of time, making a catastrophe likely.

Meanwhile, the drama had grown over the resumption of the bombing. Throughout Labor Day officials in Washington and New York kept the telephone lines going nonstop to Brussels, Naples, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and the other Contact Group capitals. As we called Washington repeatedly, our delegation became increasingly concerned. Knowing the high regard in which General Kerrick was held by his colleagues at the NSC, I asked him to speak directly to Berger to emphasize the urgency of the situation.

At NATO, both General Joulwan and the stalwart Willy Claes had received the erroneous impression from Janvier and Smith that Mladic had made important concessions. This astonished us and Joulwan. In fact, Janvier had been rudely treated by Mladic, but the French general, still trying to avoid resumption of the bombing, tried to portray his discussions as "progress." Joulwan joined us in pressing for action.

As Washington, Brussels, New York, Zagreb, and the major NATO capitals argued over the bombing, two dramatically different documents arrived from the Bosnian Serbs—one seemingly conciliatory, the other blatantly provocative. The first struck me from the outset as a phony, but it almost derailed our efforts to get the bombing resumed; the second made the decision to resume easier.

* Gligorov made an amazing recovery and resumed the presidency within a few months, but by that time Papandreou was no longer functioning in Athens.

The first was a strange, short letter from "Vice President" Koljevic. Writing to Yasushi Akashi, the civilian chief of United Nations operations in the Balkans, Koljevic said that he was prepared to "accept conditions" of General Janvier's letter. That was all. In a telephone call to Washington as we waited for Izetbegovic at the Ambassador's residence in Ankara, I argued that this letter was meaningless on at least two levels. First, Koljevic, a creature of Milosevic's, had no authority in Pale. Second, the omission of any definite or indefinite article preceding the word "conditions" was, I argued, a dead giveaway. Where was a word like "all" or even "the" preceding the word "conditions"? I pointed out that the author of the letter was a Shakespeare scholar, and knew perfectly well the exact meaning of words in English. We were startled that anyone in the United Nations or Washington was taking this silly letter seriously.

The second letter of the day was from General Mladic—and it was chilling. Addressed to General Janvier, Mladic's letter was five pages of single-spaced ranting that suggested its author was out of control. He accused Janvier of reneging on the "long hours of agreeable talks in Zvornik" a few days earlier, of which, he said, "there are TV and phone records." In a remarkable passage, Mladic charged that the NATO bombing was "more brutal" than that of the Nazis against Belgrade on April 6, 1941, a famous date in Yugoslav history. "Hitler stopped the bombing on April 7 and 8 to allow the burial of victims after the Christian custom," Mladic wrote, "while NATO deliberately targeted our churches and cemeteries during the burial of the killed." The letter continued with a series of wild threats against U.N. personnel.

Mladic followed his threats with a ludicrous peace offering. "I assure you," he wrote, "that Sarajevo is running no danger from the Republika Srpska Army." Mladic called for "an urgent meeting between the warring sides' Commanders to sign an agreement on complete, lasting, and unconditional cessation of hostilities in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina. Until this meeting I declare a one-sided cessation of hostilities in the Sarajevo region."

When we saw Mladic's letter, we assumed it resolved any questions about resuming the bombing. What answer other than a resumption of the bombing was appropriate under the circumstances?

But Mladic's combination of peace offering and threats gave Janvier and other U.N. officials pause. The French general, who had spent an almost sleepless night and morning in meetings with Mladic, had come away from the meetings publicly expressing the view that "there could be room for negotiation with the Bosnian Serbs." A U.N. spokesman in Zagreb described Mladic's letter "as the first step toward full compliance."

Our reaction to these signs that the U.N. was looking for an excuse to avoid resumption can easily be imagined. But as Clark, Kerrick, Pardew, and I

called Washington to express our outrage, Izetbegovic and Sacirbey arrived at Grossman's residence. It was already after 11:00 P.M. Temporarily leaving the drama over the resumption of bombing aside, we turned again to the draft document for the Geneva meeting.

The scene that now unfolded in Grossman's living room was memorable. Everyone was tired, especially the seventy-year-old Bosnian President, but we had important issues to discuss. As we talked, the telephones were constantly in use, as Clark or one of the other members of the delegation spoke to Washington, Naples, or Brussels about the bombing or, on several occasions, aspects of the Athens-Skopje deal, which was just beginning to get public attention.

The central issue that evening concerned names—the name of the country, and the name of each of the entities. Having spent the day in Athens and Skopje discussing the name and flag of another former Yugoslav republic, we were especially sensitive to, and increasingly weary of, the obsession the leaders in this region had with words and names. An outright military victory was no longer possible for either side, but the leaders of all three sides were willing to let their people die while they argued.

I watched Izetbegovic carefully. He and Sacirbey sat next to each other in the middle of the room. They studied carefully the draft that we had negotiated in Belgrade, entitled "Joint Agreed Statement of Political Principles." They were not happy with it. Despite the late hour, Izetbegovic had replaced his normal vagueness with a tougher, more focused attitude. He squinted and stared at the drafts Bob Owen had given him as if searching for verbal tricks that might destroy his country. He repeated phrases slowly in English while Sacirbey translated them, arguing heatedly over what they might mean.

Well after midnight, we had narrowed the discussion down almost entirely to two sentences—but they were critical to the future of Bosnia. The previous day in Belgrade we had obtained substantial concessions from Milosevic in a sentence that recognized for the first time that Bosnia would "continue its legal existence with its present borders and continuing international recognition."

In these twelve words, Owen and Hill had obtained three key concessions from Milosevic that had been unattainable for years:

- First, by accepting the words "*continue its legal existence*," Milosevic agreed that the state of Bosnia had a legal existence—moreover, an existence that was deemed to "continue," thus clearly implying a retroactive acceptance of Bosnia's claim of independence, denied by the Serbs throughout the war. This was the first time that the Bosnian

Serbs had explicitly conceded Bosnia's right to exist as an independent country.

- Second, "*with its present borders.*" Speaking for both Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs, Milosevic had accepted the existing boundaries of Bosnia, thereby officially ending territorial claims on Bosnia by Serbia, and rejecting the separatist goals of Pale.
- Third, "*continuing international recognition.*" Had Milosevic only acknowledged international recognition, there might have been uncertainty as to what was being recognized. But the use of the word "continuing" eliminated a possible ambiguity; "Bosnia" would be the same country that had been recognized by many nations and sat in the United Nations. We felt that this phrase represented a huge breakthrough, amounting to de facto recognition of Bosnia by the Serbs.

But there were also some problems with the draft:

- First, Milosevic had opposed allowing the country to keep the name "Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina." He demanded "Union" or perhaps "Confederation," names we knew Izetbegovic would reject.
- Second, Milosevic insisted that the Serb portion of the country be referred to as "Republika Srpska (R.S.)." The use of the name that Karadzic and the Pale Serbs had given themselves was certain to be a big problem for Sarajevo.

As Izetbegovic stared at the paper in front of him, he did not acknowledge the unprecedented concessions we had wrested from Milosevic. But as we expected, he was unhappy at Milosevic's attempt to change the name of the country, and strongly opposed to the use of the phrase "Republika Srpska."

I reassured Izetbegovic that the United States would never agree to Milosevic's desire to use "union" or "confederation." We urged Izetbegovic to let us propose to Milosevic that the country be called, simply, "Bosnia and Herzegovina." Izetbegovic objected. We argued that many countries, including Japan, did not have "republic" or "kingdom" or some other description of their political structure before their name. "Giving up the word 'republic' is giving up nothing, especially compared to the fact that Milosevic has now effectively recognized your country within its present boundaries," Owen told Izetbegovic.

The second point was more difficult. "That name [Republika Srpska] is like the Nazi name," Izetbegovic said. We replied that the name meant nothing, and that the governing—the overriding—sentence was the preceding one that recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country "with its present borders"—

that is, a single country, of which R.S. was a part. "In our country," Owen noted, "some states, including Texas and Massachusetts, call themselves 'republics' or 'commonwealths.' It doesn't matter, as long as they acknowledge that they are part of one country, and are so recognized by the rest of the world."

Izetbegovic continued to object for over an hour. From time to time, I left the room to speak to the White House about the bombing. It helped that Izetbegovic saw that I was fighting hard for something he desperately wanted—the resumption of bombing. But it was still difficult for him to agree to a document that contained the name Republika Srpska.

It was one in the morning. "We understand your problems with this," I told the President, "but it is the best we can do with Milosevic at this time. We do not believe that the name Republika Srpska, awful though it is, means much as long as you get everything else—international recognition, defined borders, acceptance of your legal status. You had none of this before. We can't get 'Republika Srpska' out of the draft. I'm sorry, but this is as much as we can do."

A long pause. Some discussion among the Bosnians. Finally, the answer from Sacirbey, while Izetbegovic sat silent and unhappy. "This is bad for my President, but we will try to accept it. It will be very difficult for him to explain to his people."

When Izetbegovic and Sacirbey left Ambassador Grossman's residence, it was well after 1:00 A.M. We turned back to Washington for one last, extraordinary series of telephone calls. One by one, Kerrick, Pardew, and Clark told their superiors in Washington why the bombing should be resumed. Then I had my last shot at my friends. Berger, Talbott, Slocombe, Owens, and Vershbow were still in the White House Situation Room. I had a mental picture of the group, eating pizzas and hero sandwiches, huddled together all day—still Labor Day!—while we had raced across Serbia, Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey. In fact, they had been at it now for three straight days, missing almost all of their long-planned Labor Day weekends with their families. (Berger and Talbott had canceled their plans to attend the wedding of Madeleine Albright's daughter.)

Yet no decision had been made, and within the Situation Room we sensed several different views. I later learned that Talbott and Berger, who both supported the bombing, had thought earlier in the day that its resumption would be relatively easy, but that as the day progressed, opposition from various quarters, including the U.N. field commanders and the French, made the situation far less certain. In Ankara, we were unaware of the impact that CNN was having: one of its star correspondents, Peter Arnett, had been taken by the Bosnian Serbs to positions outside Sarajevo, where he had filmed scenes he

was told were the beginning of the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the area around Sarajevo, as Mladic had promised in his ranting letter. This was a standard Bosnian Serb tactic: showing unilateral and phony "compliance" in an effort to head off NATO action—but it had worked for years.

"Let me be clear," I said. "It is very late here now, and we are perhaps overly tired, but we have an absolutely unanimous point of view: the bombing must be resumed. If it is not, we will do our best, but our chances for success in the negotiations will be seriously reduced. The Bosnians are barely on board with our Geneva draft, and when we see Izetbegovic again in the morning for a last review of the draft, the bombing must have resumed."

I wanted to end on a high historical note, unusual for this sort of conversation. "If we do not resume the bombing, it will have lasted less than forty-eight hours. It will be another catastrophe. NATO will again look like a paper tiger. The Bosnian Serbs will return to their blackmailing ways." There was a short silence at the other end of the phone. Don Kerrick, who was listening in on an extension, looked at me, smiled, and gave me thumbs-up sign. I concluded: "I know how difficult this is, and what I am about to say may sound melodramatic, but history could well hang in the balance tonight. I truly believe that you may never take any decision as public officials more important than this one. Give us bombs for peace. Give us a resumption of the bombing by morning."