

## Chapter 14: Peace for Our Time?

*The hand that signed the paper felled a city  
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath  
Doubled the globe of death and halved a country  
These five kings a king to death*

*The five kings count the dead but do not soften  
The crusted wound nor pat the brow  
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven  
Hands have no tears to flow  
The Hand that Signed the Paper Felled a City*

-- Dylan Thomas

Aside from dashing British and French hopes for a Serbian victory, the unexpected Croatian triumph in the Krajina unequivocally changed the military and political equilibrium in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If the Croats hadn't liberated the Krajina, Bihac would have met the same fate as Srebrenica and Zepa.

The Croatian-Bosnian military alliance reclaimed 20% of Bosnian territory from the Serbs that the Western powers had been unable to wrest through diplomatic means. Just as the alliance was at the brink of defeating the Serbs, the Western powers, especially Britain, placed tremendous pressure on Croatia to desist in the Bosnian campaign. Once the Croats had disengaged, the Bosnian army couldn't sustain the momentum alone and suffered defeats.

The Serbs had already seized 70% of Bosnian territory and had no reason to accept the Contact Group's offer of 51%. When the successful Croatian-Bosnian offensive changed the balance of power, the Serbs, fearful that the alliance would retake even more territory, suddenly changed their minds and accepted the offer.

By successfully recovering all but 4.5% of its territory and rescuing Western Bosnia, the Croats had inadvertently influenced politics in the United States. Because Bosnia had disappeared from the front pages, President Clinton could concentrate on policies that helped his 1996 reelection campaign. So Clinton pressured the Bosnian government to join in peace negotiations with Croatian and Serbian leaders at Dayton, Ohio. The West's indifferent reaction to the savage aftermath of Zepa and Srebrenica had a sobering effect on the Bosnian government. Izetbegovic woke up to reality and accepted the fact that the Bosnians had to take whatever peace settlement was offered to them.

In the October 12, 1992, presidential debate, Clinton called for air strikes and an end to the arms embargo. Although Clinton took 3 1/2 years to initiate the first, he effectively sabotaged the second. Bush's policy of inaction had found its rationale in the information he was fed by Belgrade's cabal in the U.S. government. But the reason why Clinton continued Bush's policies remains mysterious. The only gesture the Bush administration made to help non-Serbian victims came when it created a no-fly zone. But that step was simply a reaction to criticism from the Clinton campaign. Once in office, the Clinton administration consistently articulated that it wanted to preserve the integrity of an indivisible Bosnian state, rightly condemning partition as a reward for ethnic cleansing. But at Dayton the administration forced Kafkaesque surrender terms on the Bosnian government and therefore actually accepted Serbian gains.

Even though the Dayton Accords are loaded with absurdities that decimate Bosnia's sovereignty, the treaty did stop the rampant slaughter of non-Serbs in Bosnia. The Clinton administration's efforts have put the mayhem temporarily on hold, at least until after the American presidential elections. To this end Clinton sent

American troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ostensibly the troops were supposed to be home by Christmas 1996, but given the realities of Dayton they will, most likely, come home when they cross Clinton's metaphorical bridge in the next century. Many have said that sending American troops to Bosnia was a political time bomb for Clinton. But Clinton will reap political rewards as long as there are no body bags. American casualties are unlikely because Clinton placed enormous pressure on all the protagonists to adhere to his game plan until after his election. Clinton may be many things, but he's no fool. Although the Dayton Accords don't promise much of a future for Bosnia, they've certainly helped Clinton's political future.

The behavior of Brigadier General Patrick O'Neal and Colonel Gregory Fontenot, as reported in the Wall Street Journal (Dec. 12, 1995), may reflect Clinton's true attitude toward Bosnia-Herzegovina and prejudice toward the Croats because O'Neal and Fontenot are products of war colleges, extensive briefings, and Clinton's foreign policies. When O'Neal's troops crossed an international border into Bosnia, a local militiaman had the temerity to ask for passports and blocked their way. The American general pointed at one of his soldiers' M-16 automatic rifles and said, "That's our passport." His next logical statement might have been: "Shoot first and ask questions later." O'Neal's bravado was more appropriate for a successful invasion force than for one engaged in implementing a peace accord.

In the same article, Colonel Fontenot was quoted ordering his troops to adopt a cocky posture during a pre-mission briefing. To illustrate, he had one of his sergeants sling a light machine gun across his chest. "It's the casual, yet 'I'll kick your a\_\_ if you f\_\_ with me' look," the colonel said. He then turned to two African-American soldiers who would be part of his convoy. "It'll be interesting to hear what you two see, because the Croats are racist," he warned them. "They kill people for the color of their skins."

Since Fontenot most recently taught at the Fort Leavenworth School of Advanced Military Studies, the U.S. Army's most elite war college, this prejudicial remark probably reflects current official military doctrine.

The Dayton Accords have essentially partitioned Bosnia along ethnic lines and rewarded Serbia by lifting the sanctions. Instead of condemning the consequences of ethnic cleansing, the accords codify them. The U.S. has rewarded the use of genocide, rape, and mayhem by consolidating Serbian gains and ordering U.S. troops to patrol Greater Serbia's borders.

The accords promise refugees the ability to return to their homes without risk of harassment, intimidation, persecution, or discrimination--particularly in regard to their ethnic origin. But the promises are empty. Even if the refugees are allowed to return, it's highly likely that their former homes which may have survived the battles will be blown up before they have a chance to resettle. But justifiable fear will hold most back. The same Serbian "police" and thugs that ethnically cleansed whole towns and villages will remain in control of those areas. No provision in the accords assures the refugees' safety. Besides, most repatriates would only find heaps of rubble where their homes had once stood. All infrastructure and institutions needed to ensure civility have been destroyed.

With no agricultural production or housing available to them, the refugees will most likely have to be placed in ghettos or, more accurately, concentration camps. Refugee centers typically lack schools, hospitals, or civil administrations and are prey to epidemics. Under such conditions, refugees suffer the humiliation of an aimless existence and total dependence on humanitarian aid. The West shouldn't be surprised when the next Bosnian generation, if there is one, matures into a band of terrorists. The surviving Muslim children won't forget the dead or how those in the West watched while their fathers were wounded or killed, and their mothers and sisters raped. Despite the fact that Bosnians are the most secularized Muslims in the Islamic world, such camps will become fertile breeding grounds for fundamentalism.

Although the Bosnians continue to place trust in the Clinton administration's nebulous gentlemen's agreement to arm and train its army, the accords make absolutely no reference to arming anyone. Given the past

performance of these "gentlemen," the Bosnians will be awfully naive if they choose to believe in them now.

The Dayton Accords also call for a general disarmament. The Serbian forces, which had most of the arms anyway, will retain 85% of their pre-Dayton level, while the Bosnian Army will lose 87.5% of its weapons. The Serbs couldn't have received a sweeter deal.

The Dayton Accords seem more and more curious the longer they're analyzed. The agreement may have sounded the death knell for the Bosnian state because when Bosnia accepted Article II, "the rights and freedoms set forth in The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms shall have priority over all other laws," it surrendered its sovereignty. The new Bosnian Constitutional Court will have nine justices, two from each ethnic group (Muslim, Croat, and Serb) and three appointed by the European Court of Human Rights. But the foreign judges' authority will supersede that of the local judges. In a March 4, 1996 Insight article, Duncan Hunter, chairman of the House National Security Subcommittee on Military Procurement, concluded that the U.N. appointed high representative will be the real government in Bosnia.

All stipulations indicate that Bosnia will be a U.N. Protectorate. A U.N. appointee will monitor the peace settlement, promote compliance by local authorities, and coordinate the activities of all civilian organizations and agencies involved in rebuilding Bosnia. The high representative will give guidance to a U.N. international police task force charged with advising, training, monitoring and inspecting all law enforcement activities and facilities, including associated judicial organizations. In the rare instances when the new central Bosnian government arrives at a decision without input from non-Bosnian sources, the government's decision can be vetoed by any of the other parties. This condition isn't very conducive to governance because any law that doesn't accommodate the Serbs will be thrown out.

Although the Dayton Accords granted IFOR (the NATO Implementation Force in Bosnia) virtually complete discretion to take police action, IFOR is neither obliged to do so, nor does it have guidelines to conduct such actions. IFOR has been given the task of creating conditions for free and fair elections, assisting humanitarian organizations, controlling all Bosnian airspace, clearing the roads of mines, and observing and preventing interference with the movement of civilian populations, refugees, and displaced persons. But IFOR has neither the mechanism to implement, nor the means to enforce these mandates. The accords stipulate an international police force, but the force's only real mandate is to train.

Human rights monitors were wrong when they stated that 1992 will go down in history as the year the Muslims of Bosnia were extinguished. Their estimate was premature. Nevertheless, the future looks bleak for the Muslims under the Dayton Accords because the treaty represents a peace only the West can live with.

The Dayton Accords are rife with contradictions. One provision calls for general elections among Bosnian citizens based upon where they had registered in 1991. This provision sounds good because it will allow the people who fled a chance to vote. But Serbian officials are now arguing that voters should be limited to the people presently residing in Bosnia. Adding to the controversy, those responsible for the balloting have sent forms printed in English to the Bosnians. The West's history of pro-Serbian efforts makes this mistake suspicious. Refugees desiring to vote are faced with another dilemma that has far reaching consequences for their well being. If the several hundred thousand Muslim refugees now living in Germany do vote, they may lose their refugee status and be expelled.

The Western nations have failed to understand the importance the Muslims place on pursuing and prosecuting war criminals. For Muslims, justice is the very foundation for reconciliation. Bosnian Ambassador to the United States Sven Alkalij has said to me on a number of occasions, "Justice first, then talk about reconciliation." Unanswered injustices, both real and perceived, may result in future conflicts. For any healing process to occur, those responsible must be tried for their crimes against humanity. Bosnian Ambassador to the U.N. Muhamed Sarcibey said, "[peace] will fail if the war trials tribunal is not supported and does not bring

about at least a minimum level of justice."

Bosnian survivors felt encouraged when the U.N. finally set up the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993. Although the tribunal has no power to arrest criminals, it offers the prospect of accountability to the perpetrators of murder, rape and havoc. But what the U.N. gives, the U.N. also takes away. In early 1994, the U.N. announced that it would disband the War Crimes Commission, the tribunal evidentiary body, for political expediency. The U.N. most likely emasculated the tribunal in order to avoid complicating the peace process.

The U.N. had intended for the International Criminal Tribunal to remain only symbolic. But the tribunal took on a life of its own under the guidance of its Chief Justice, Richard Goldstone. His tenacity to seek the truth has surprisingly legitimized the judicial body.

While Goldstone's unexpected tough attitude lent a great deal of credibility for the proceedings, the tribunal's numerous breaches has raised a number of questions. Despite voluminous evidence, only three JNA officers were charged for committing war crimes in Croatia and no Bosnian Muslim has been charged for similar acts in the Muslim-Croat fighting.

During the trial of accused Serbian war criminal Dusan Tadic, the tribunal postponed its proceedings for six months because the defense blamed NATO bombing for halting its search for witnesses in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The trial was supposed to have begun in November, 1995, but didn't actually commence until May, 1996.

Since Tadic's arrest, 56 other war criminals have been formally accused. But as usual, the media has used a double standard in its coverage of accused Croats and Serbs. The press has sharply criticized Croatia for not turning over accused Croatian General Tihomir Blaskic to the Hague, but has been loath to criticize and exhort Serbia for not turning over criminal master planners Karadzic and Mladic. What the press apparently failed to understand in the Blaskic case was that legal procedures had to be followed before anyone could be extradited from Croatia. Croatia had no law on its books to implement the Hague's request. Once the legal questions were resolved, Blaskic voluntarily turned himself in.

The U.N. has made a number of colossal errors in judgment since the beginning of the conflict. Under the guidance of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the U.N. saw the conflict as a civil war and relegated itself to the role of a supposedly impartial peacekeeper. But the U.N. proved entirely ineffective even in this limited capacity.

Despite the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina was a duly recognized sovereign nation, the U.N.-imposed arms embargo prevented Bosnia from doing what all states have a legitimate right to do--defend itself against transborder aggression. The arms embargo helped prolong this conflict even more than France and England's tacit complicity with the Serbs or the anemia of the international media. The aggressors had all the weapons of modern warfare at their disposal and the victims had few. But the West's argument, particularly Britain's, that an end to the arms embargo would've increased the violence and caused the Serbs to accelerate their aggression, is only partly valid. Until 1995, the Serbs had held back nothing and yet were relatively free of casualties. The lifting of the arms embargo would've increased the Croats and Bosnians' ability to defend themselves, so any post-embargo increase in violence would've resulted in reduced Croatian and Bosnian casualties and increased Serbian casualties. The effectiveness of the Croatian-Bosnian offensive after the receipt of illicit arms proves the point.

The U.N. was loathe to express any sort of outrage when Serbia clearly attacked another sovereign state across international borders. Britain, France, the United States, and Russia failed to act decisively. In the process, the major powers battered a host of fundamental international agreements including the U.N. Charter, the Geneva Conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as some basic values like the rule

of law, inviolability of borders, and safety of innocent civilians.

According to a CIA report on Bosnia, "More than half of the prewar population of 4,365,000 has either fled the country, been displaced within the country, or been killed." After absorbing 272,000 displaced persons from Serbian-occupied Croatia and 640,000 Bosnian refugees in November, 1992, Croatia informed international bodies that it wouldn't be able to admit more Bosnians. Typically, France and Britain, who had taken 3,000 refugees between them, and the United States, who had magnanimously offered to accept 1,000, sharply criticized the Croatian government for its action. Further illustrating blatant Western hypocrisy, in November, 1993, the Independent exposed a secret pact among the European Union member states barring Bosnian refugees.

U.N. peace negotiator and former director of Kissinger and Associates Peter Carrington set a precedent when he all but ignored the only legitimate parties in the war, the governments; and instead negotiated with illegitimate parties, the warring factions. All the Western leaders parroted Serbian propaganda by calling the conflict a civil war between ancient ethnic rivals in which all sides were guilty. Most perversely, the West blamed the victims. As the Serbians wished, the West didn't take sides and played the role of supposedly impartial peacekeepers. The West preferred Yugoslav unity and made it clear to the Belgrade regime that no Western military would intervene.

The West, the U.S. in particular, must share the blame for allowing the conflict to expand and the slaughter to continue. For example, at the same time American reconnaissance planes were photographing mass graves in Srebrenica, Washington officials were seeking to rehabilitate the image of Serbian President Milosevic.

Whenever the Muslims were victorious against the Serbs, the Western powers protested via the media. More vitriolic threats were lodged by U.N. officials against the Muslims for even the most token advances than were ever made against the Serbs for their overt atrocities. U.N. observers went to great lengths to report that Muslims had mutilated Serbian prisoners, while later reports proved that the incidents never happened.

The West's role ultimately proved either counter-productive or abetted the Serbian position. Any proposal that could've been meaningful came too late.

The breakup of Yugoslavia exposed the fallacy that European security can exist without U.S. leadership and intervention. Due to this conflict, the U.S. has had to bail out the Europeans from their follies for the third time this century.

The West preferred to rely on peace negotiations and peacekeepers to end the conflict rather than allow the non-Serbs to freely defend themselves. Surely the Croats and Muslims would've chosen to defend themselves if they had ever been given the choice.

Europe must now look inward and see that it has a vested interest in helping to rebuild the infrastructure of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Europe, particularly Croatia, has been inundated with refugees. As of September, 1992, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Germany has taken 220,000 refugees, Switzerland 70,520, Austria 57,000, Hungary 50,000, and Sweden 47,000.

The Muslims will be the big losers regardless of the final outcome of the Dayton Accords. The only viable option for the Muslims is to put their differences with the Croats aside and cement the historically friendly Muslim-Croat relationship. Such an action would go a long way in helping both groups overcome the harshest vicissitudes they've endured together on bloody Balkan soil.

Instead of cooperating, the Muslims set a dangerous precedent. No sooner was the ink dry on the Dayton Accords, when they began purging Croats from positions of trust in the infrastructure of the military,

government, economy, and education. For example, not only have the Muslims made it difficult for Croats to enroll in Sarajevo's medical school, those already enrolled are subjected to a relentless campaign of intimidation and coercion. To protect Croatian students and provide them with an education without fear, the Croats are now in the process of establishing a medical school in Mostar, which will drive an even deeper wedge between them.

But it isn't only the Croats being discriminated against, Muslims adhering to the pre-war mores of Bosnian society are also being ostracized. Muslim fundamentalism has reared its head in the Bosnian government's hierarchy. Although it isn't as serious as it is in Afghanistan there've been numerous reported incidents of imposing fundamental standards on Bosnian Muslims by coercion.

If the Croats and Muslims don't come to some sort of rapprochement, it's a certainty that as soon as the ground becomes frozen enough for tanks to maneuver the Croats and Muslims will be at each others throats, especially in the Mostar area. The Serbs will probably keep out of it, but will occasionally lob a few shells to let them know they're still around. A healthy Muslim-Bosnian-Croat alliance loosely confederated with Croatia would benefit everyone.

The West has been shamelessly reluctant to call ethnic cleansing genocide despite the Serbian actions' fulfillment of the tribunal's definition: acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Instead, the West has elected to treat the genocide of the Muslims with the same blindness it applied for decades to Stalin's murder of over 20 million Russians, Poles, Balts and others. As has happened with Stalin, perhaps some would-be historians will even come to question whether the Muslim genocide really took place. Hitler and Stalin used similar methods, mass murder and concentration camps, but Stalin killed twice as many. Yet Stalin sat at the negotiating table as a man of honor in much the same way that those responsible for similar crimes in Bosnia do now. The end result of the conflict in Bosnia clearly signals the victory of Byzantine deviousness over Western Machiavellianism.

The Balkan conflict between the Orthodox Serbs and Roman Catholic Croats resulted in the Muslims of Bosnia being squeezed out of Europe. A number of commentators and opinion editors have speculated that the reason why the West could stand by and watch the rape of Bosnia without getting emotional was because the victims were Muslims. In his last book, *Beyond Peace*, Richard Nixon argued that if the Bosnians had been Christians or Jews, Europe would've intervened. Instead, during the first half of the 1990s, the European Community was a passive collaborator in the Serbian attempt to purge the last remnants of the Ottoman Empire from Europe.

The crisis in former Yugoslavia was brought on mainly by the West's inability to deal with the collapse of Communism. The masses have suffered the consequences of the West's failure. But even at this late stage, if, by the illumination of the facts, Western humanism can inject a level of justice into this rather hopeless situation then the effort will be worth it. For the West must keep in mind that although the surviving victims of war and injustice suffer, they never suffer from amnesia.