



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

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Chairman - Helsinki Commission

Today's hearing is on Bosnia's future under the Dayton Agreement. Five years ago, Bosnia was still at war. Bihac was still under siege. Srebrenica was about to be taken. Serb militants were confident in their holding of over 70 percent of the country. Soon, however, a joint Bosnian-Croatian offensive would combine with robust NATO air intervention to end the fighting, and, by the end of 1995, the political agreement formally ending the conflict was reached in Dayton and signed in Paris.

The end of almost four years of hostilities was certainly a reason for relief, but, for many of us and - I am sure - for many Bosnians, there was no sense of triumph. Dayton involved compromises, including the division of the country into two entities, which reflected the horrific realities caused by aggression and ethnic cleansing. Dayton involved negotiating directly with Slobodan Milosevic, the person most responsible for instigating the conflict in the first place, elevating his status in the process. Most of all, Dayton was late. The international community, led by the United States, could have and should have intervened decisively in the first year of the conflict. Instead, the world watched people lose their homes, lose their friends and relatives, and lose their lives, while political leaders abroad accepted efforts to blame the horror on history and not the thugs behind the guns. Instead, the world waited until Bosnia became more expensive to clean up and put peacekeeping forces in a more precarious position than they otherwise would have found.

Fortunately, however, Dayton maintained Bosnia-Herzegovina as a single state, in principle. Dayton foresaw this state as democratic, in principle. People would be allowed to return to their original homes, in principle. In short, just as the like the Helsinki Final Act and so many other international documents, Dayton is what you make of it. It is a struggle to turn words into deeds.

The international community can rightfully point to successes, albeit in incremental steps. Many of the leading extremists have been marginalized, although some of them indicted for war crimes and genocide remain at large. There are increasing signs of support for moderate political options, even though ethnically-based parties remain entrenched in power and their own corruption. Recently, there has been an upswing in returns, although minority returns have traditionally been so low that an upswing isn't saying much.

In my view, these successes are reason for hope, not for satisfaction. Moreover, these successes only provide hope that Bosnia will not disintegrate as a state under the international community's continued care; they do not guarantee that Bosnia will strengthen as a state emerging independent from that care. That should be our goal.

At this hearing of the Helsinki Commission, we hope to hear whether such a goal can even be reached under the Dayton Agreement, with all of its contradictions and compromises. We hope to learn more about what Bosnians themselves are doing. Are they slowly but surely accepting the realities of ethnic division? Are they slowly but surely reestablishing those ties which once made Bosnia-Herzegovina the home of a successful multi-ethnic society before conflict was imported? We also hope to learn more about what the international community is doing, and

what differences its actions are really making.

Our first panel is composed of various representatives of the international community. First, we have Ambassador James Pardew, Principal Deputy Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State for Kosovo and Dayton Implementation. The Ambassador will present the views of the Administration on U.S. policy to Bosnia and Dayton implementation.

Next, we have U.S. Army General Wesley Clark, who, until recently, served as Supreme Allied Commander Europe. General, you are distinguished not only by your rank but also by your expertise. You have had the Balkans as your portfolio since the Bosnian conflict and well before Dayton was even envisaged, so your insights into the region will be most welcome.

Our first panel concludes with Ambassador Robert Barry, who is in his third year as head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina. While the Mission has many tasks, its leading ones are human rights, democracy-building and elections, all of which are crucial to Bosnia's future. We look forward to your views as seen from Sarajevo.

Our second panel is composed of leading Bosnian figures, who will present their views on Dayton implementation and the future of their country. First, we have Dr. Haris Silajdzic, formerly the Bosnian Prime Minister, whom many of us have known since the early days of the conflict if not before and who has consistently told the international community not what it wants to hear but what he believes needs to be done for Bosnia to survive. Next, we have Selim Beslagic, who as mayor, kept the city of Tuzla as a bastion of ethnic tolerance during the conflict, even as it was shelled and as the displaced crammed its streets. Finally, we have Milan Trbojevic, who is the Advisor to the Republika Srpska Prime Minister for Judicial and Legal Issues. He will give us the view of Dayton implementation as seen from Republika Srpska, and the challenges which lie ahead.