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AS REVISED
BY HOLBROOKE

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1

REVISED AND UPDATED: May 1, 1999

MEMORANDUM TO: The Secretary of State
The National Security Advisor

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

1. Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behavior is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions--admittedly of a highly speculative nature--about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behavior was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly (but not wholly) irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation--a sense that he has trapped himself.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His personal high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities.

At first he made real progress toward these goals. Most of the EU recognized Yugoslavia over our objections. The Italians and Greeks made a grotesque deal with him for a large stake in the state telecom company, netting Milosevic \$1 billion in cash, money he could use to pay the army, bribe people, and perhaps move partly off-shore for his own uses and future protection. In 1996-97 the United States and the Contact Group offered him a "road map" in which, in return for implementation of Dayton, he would get the "outer wall" sanctions lifted or suspended on a rolling basis.

This policy was well underway when it was derailed by Kosovo. His dreams for rejoining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member are now gone forever.

As this realization sinks in, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map--and he surely knows it. He is will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia.

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PER E.O. 13526

2014-0547-m (1.24)

2/27/2017 KCH

With this bleak prospect facing him--one I suspect he is beginning to understand--his behavior has shown far less of its previous cleverness or tactical flexibility--not, at least, until he released the three American POWs to Jesse Jackson. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox--short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends.

Perhaps for this reason Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the shortest possible time frame, but surely doom him in the long term. It is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible; no more creeping repression from Belgrade, just real, all-out murderous ethnic cleansing. Have deeply hostile psychological factors in his make-up taken over from his rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which takes place far from his clean and isolated presidential palaces and villas. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behavior of the man who launched Operation Horseshoe is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result. This does not, however, answer the critical questions of when and how.

2. What About His Associates? The men around him are not strong or courageous. While they all owe their current positions to Milosevic, many of them have told Chris Hill, Wes Clark, and me over the years that they held views different from those of their leader. At times each tried to suggest to us that he held "softer," more reasonable views than Milosevic.

In the end, facing the abyss, almost all of them would seek to save their own skins. Whatever their individual views on the sacredness of Serb soil in Kosovo, they are not likely to be ready to sacrifice themselves on the altar of Prince Lazar. I believe that the early signs of dissension within Serb ranks (and with Montenegro) are real, and probably reflect even greater unhappiness than we are aware of. This may be an exploitable opportunity, but must be handled with extreme care and confidentiality.

ADDITION ON MAY 1:

In rereading this memo, which was written in great haste, I realize that I omitted a critical caveat regarding Milosevic, and thereby may have left a misleading impression of my view as to what he might do.

The fact is that it is impossible to predict what Milosevic will do. Broadly speaking, he faces two choices: first, try to survive and perhaps even retain power through a negotiation; or second, hold to his current position (with relatively minor adjustments) no matter what happens, thus assuring his ultimate destruction. The key rests inside his own head, where no one can go. We cannot discount the possibility that, if he feels he is doomed anyway, he may choose to take as many Albanians with him, while disregarding the suffering of the Serb people. (This was how Hitler reacted when he realized that the war was lost: kill as many Jews as possible and the hell with the destruction of Germany itself.)

On the other hand, if his associates, including the military, understand that they can bring the war to an end by removing Milosevic, they may be willing to act. It is therefore critical that those with the power to remove or undermine Milosevic understand that if they act, they will receive a receptive response from NATO and Washington.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504

2988
LIMITED ACCESS

April 21, 1999

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR SAMUEL R. BERGER

FROM:

GREG SCHULTE *MS*

SUBJECT:

Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Slobodan Milosevic

At your request, I attach a short analysis of the two memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, written in the form of a covering memorandum to the President.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Attachments

Tab I Memorandum for the President

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan
Milosevic

*Done
JB
4-22-99*

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Reason: 1.5 (a), (d)

Declassify On: April 21, 2009

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E.O. 13526
White House Guidelines, May 16, 2017
By *W* NARA, Date *5/6/2024*
2008-0994-F-3

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

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PER E.O. 13526
2014-0547-W (1.12)
5/6/2024 W

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER

SUBJECT: Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Sloban Milosevic

I attach two thoughtful memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, one on next steps for Kosovo and the second on Slobodan Milosevic. He characterizes both as "works in progress."

In the first memoranda, Dick reviews the choices that both we and Milosevic face. Dick rules out ending the bombing without achieving our objectives; he also rules out sending ground troops into a potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation. His preferred choice is to intensify the bombing and continue until the Serbs change their position -- preferably by changing their leader. Indeed one of Dick's main conclusions is that our real goal should be regime change, even if this takes time. *(We must recognize, however, that the more explicit we make this a goal, the higher we raise the bar and the less*
Dick's conclusion faces us with a difficult dilemma if *more incentive* intensified bombing succeeds in causing Milosevic to seek a *to Milosevic* negotiated outcome. Can we negotiate with a man who is destined *has* for indictment? Will negotiating with Milosevic give him new *to come.* legitimacy and undercut efforts to change his regime? Faced *(The US)* with these questions, Dick recommends that we negotiate with someone other than Milosevic, at a site outside Yugoslavia. He further recommends that the United States control the negotiations, that we continue the bombing through the talks, and that we stick to our core goals but be ready to defer most political issues.

Dick's second memorandum addresses Milosevic himself and questions his mental stability. Dick suggests that Milosevic has adopted a policy that he now knows he cannot survive. His close associates probably understand this and might look for ways to save their own skins. Thus we should be watching for signs of dissension that we can exploit to achieve our aims with respect to Kosovo, as well as to support a change in regime.

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Reason: 1.5 (a) (d)
Declassify On: 4/21/09

cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

Indeed, we may already have detected initial signs of dissension, in the form of a recent message to Chris Hill from Nikolai Sainovic, the Serb security chief in Pristina, and a separate message from Vuk Draskovic, the one-time opposition leader and now Deputy Prime Minister, sent through a Serb-American associate of Milan Panic.

I agree with most of Dick's conclusions:

- We need to stick to our conditions, press forward with our air campaign and reinforce it with additional economic pressure. Despite those questioning the efficacy of airpower, it is ~~much~~ too early to consider any other course.
- We should plan for ground options in a "non-permissive" environment, but recognize the real risks involved, not only the problems associated with getting in, but the risks once we are there and the difficulty of getting out.
- The nature of an agreement has changed since Rambouillet. The focus should be on our core goals (Serb forces out, international security force in, refugees back) with agreement on the political arrangements deferred. This means preparing for an international administration of Kosovo that is nominally "interim" but likely to be lengthy unless there is a regime change in Belgrade.

- While difficult, we need to look for interlocutors other than Milosevic. ~~This supports a policy of regime change.~~ It also hedges against the risk that Milosevic has consciously chosen a suicidal course and will be unwilling to consider any type of agreement with the West. ?

- We need to do more to engage the Kosovar Albanians. State is now starting a more systematic effort to reach out to all members of the delegation from Rambouillet and to promote regular contacts with us and amongst themselves.

I am less enthusiastic than Dick on a policy of "overst" (v.s. covert) regime change until we have gained acceptance to the current conditions from Milosovic

~~Dick also concludes that we should not rely too heavily on Moscow to help achieve a settlement. It is true that Primakov and Ivanov have done little more than to promote Belgrade's position. However, I believe that the involvement of Chernomyrdin offers a new opportunity that we should seek to exploit. However, we will need to avoid any temptation to compromise on our core goals with respect to Belgrade in order to accommodate Moscow.~~

is very skeptical that the Russians can be helpful. I share his skepticism but believe it is important to stay engaged with them to help Russia from crossing over the danger line

Attachments

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

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Divider Title: _____ A

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1

April 20, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: RICHARD HOLBROOKE

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NEXT STEPS

As the bombing ends its fourth week, allow me to offer some thoughts on the choices that lie before us:

PART ONE: His Choices, Our Choices

I. Sloba's Choices. While we control the bombing, Milosevic controls the timing and nature of the first political/diplomatic response. However, none of his options are attractive:

--First choice: he refuses to blink--and continues his current defiance of NATO;

--Second choice: he accepts our terms, in effect, surrendering--or else is replaced by a group who accept our position;

--Third choice: having emptied most of Kosovo of Albanians, Milosevic announces that he is ready to negotiate and makes a half-serious offer in an effort to split the Alliance and the Contact Group.

II. Our Choices--keyed to his three choices:

1. In the event that Belgrade continues to stand up to the air campaign: We have three courses, broadly speaking:

--end the bombing without achieving our objectives. Result: Milosevic wins.

--send ground troops to Yugoslavia in a "non-permissive environment"--that is, invade and occupy at least part of Yugoslavia. Result: Potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation of large portion of Yugoslavia.

--continue to bomb. This leaves the situation unresolved--in effect, taking us back to the starting point of this memo.

If the Administration wishes to avoid being pushed by events into either defeat or invasion, the bombing must intensify--and continue until the Serbs change their position, preferably by changing their leader.

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2. In the event that Belgrade accepts our terms or loses power, then we achieve our objectives. Result: We win.

3. In the event that Milosevic makes a semi-serious offer that still falls short of our core goals, we will face some complicated decisions which could strain relations with our Contact Group and NATO colleagues:

--Should we negotiate with Milosevic at all? Dayton may have been a deal with the devil, but it ended a war on acceptable terms. Milosevic kept enough of his word, especially regarding no NATO/American casualties in Bosnia, so as to justify continued dealings with him. But at the same time he was re-legitimized and re-empowered politically, and he then strengthened his economy with big international deals.

--But after Kosovo he is not the same person he was after Dayton. Whatever the details of an agreement, his sole goals will be to retain power, retain Kosovo, and avoid punishment for his own deeds. Can we allow that after Kosovo? Can Milosevic, the most disruptive person in Europe in half a century, become the co-guarantor of Kosovo's future?

--After the war is over, the world is going to demand justice. There will be widespread public opposition to any deal, no matter how good, that leaves Milosevic in power. This time, the War Crimes Tribunal will need to be satisfied. We will not be able to let indicted war criminals run loose, as is the case with Karadzic and Mladic. And I assume that Louise Arbour will indict Milosevic.

Our real goal: Regime change. Our real goal, whether stated or not, must be a change in the leadership of Yugoslavia. While there is no hard information that suggests such an outcome, we should not preclude it. I have an instinct that Milosevic is finished, but cannot foresee how or when¹.

--Nothing in wartime is more difficult than effecting a regime change. Even Churchill ignored several promising opportunities to help anti-Hitler plotters. Milosevic, however, runs a "soft dictatorship," more like Marcos than Saddam or Ceaucescu. The Serbs are not the North Vietnamese or the Iraqis; Milosevic is not popular and Serb unity, while it may exist at the moment, is not a long-term Serb thing. The men around him might look for ways to distance themselves from him; one way to do this would be to re-open lines of communication with Western officials. However, it would require the active support of the Army and some powerful business interests to remove him. There is also the danger

¹ See separate memorandum, "Has Milosevic Lost His Mind?"

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that he might be replaced, at least at the outset, by an even harder line ultra-nationalist, but that is a risk worth taking.

While Milosevic's departure from power is the optimum outcome, policy must be based on the likelihood that he cannot be dislodged, at least not in the time frame we seek, and it may therefore become necessary to negotiate with his regime once again. Thus the current Administration position of remaining vague on the issue in public is correct.

If negotiating with him or a regime he still controls is unavoidable, here are some important considerations:

A. Bombing must continue while the discussions take place. Milosevic is certain to try to link the opening of talks to the cessation of bombing². The Russians and perhaps some of our NATO allies will support him, but we must be unyielding.

B. Should the talks be with Milosevic, or with a subordinate? We do not wish to enhance his stature by sitting down with him again, but as long as he is in power only he can actually make a deal. Nonetheless, it would be preferable to deal with other people, if possible--including close subordinates who might look for ways to save themselves.

C. Where should talks be held? Milosevic will never leave Yugoslavia again, for fear that he will either be arrested by the War Crimes Tribunal or overthrown while he is away. So direct talks with him would have to be in Belgrade while NATO is bombing--not a good arrangement.

D. Who should conduct these talks? We are, as usual, constrained by Alliance and Contact Group politics. We cannot exclude our partners, yet we cannot conduct a serious negotiation if they participate on an equal basis. A conference can be formally co-chaired by the United States, Russia and a single EU representative, but real negotiations must be conducted in private--without the press watching every step--by the United States, which can keep the others informed. The planes are mostly ours; same with the negotiations.

--It seems likely Milosevic will offer to negotiate with someone other than the United States--the Russians, Kofi Annan, Carl Bildt, the Greeks, the Ukrainians, the Chinese, etc. If he succeeds in such a ploy, we would be allowing other parties to determine what the air war was for--that is,

² The exact position the North Vietnamese took in 1965-68, incidentally.

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what our war aims are. This strikes me as unthinkable.

E. Where? This time around, the United States is probably out. France, which had its shot and botched it badly, should not be given a second chance. Moscow will surely offer its lovely hotels and conference rooms, but that would be absurd. Geneva reeks of history's failures, and it is virtually impossible to keep the press and the international community out of the way. A remote place somewhere in Europe that can be sealed off and controlled would have to be found.

--Given these considerations, my recommendation is that any talks with the Yugoslav government be conducted not with Milosevic, but outside Yugoslavia with empowered subordinates, while we continue to look for ways to undermine him or encourage his removal.

PART TWO: War Aims

NATO has been criticized for lack of clarity or precision about the purposes of the bombing. But this is neither surprising nor troubling in the early stages of such a fluid situation. War aims often evolve as facts on the ground change. In this case, the original stated aims of the bombing had to change once the atrocities became apparent.

The current statements of our goals seems correct to me. We should continue to stress the three most urgent: the refugees go home; the Yugoslav security forces leave; and an international security force moves into Kosovo in a permissive environment. In turn, the KLA must agree to a cease-fire. (Disarming them, a key part of Rambouillet, will be a more difficult matter.)

Of course, Milosevic's proposals will fall far short of these goals. He will seek conditions that discourage refugee return; insist on leaving some of his security and border forces and offer to return to either the October or the Rambouillet levels; and oppose any international security force, then offer to allow one that has no NATO troops. All these ploys, and others too numerous to anticipate, should be rejected.

As for the political issues, which are more complex, we are unlikely to settle them in the first phase of negotiations, although we should try to make as much progress as possible. Rambouillet will no longer satisfy the KLA, which is now in substantial control of the Kosovar political situation. But most of the principles of Rambouillet are still valid, and should be part of the general framework agreement that accompanies the end of the bombing.

PART THREE: The Post-bombing Status of Kosovo and other Considerations.

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The post-bombing status of Kosovo might be a Trusteeship, under Chapter VII authority from the UN Security Council. This would not formally change the international status of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia, but it would remove it from the political control of Belgrade for a specified period of time. Partition of Kosovo strikes me as a bad idea, but I would not rule out completely the possibility of dividing Kosovo into different zones of temporary control, along the lines of the West Bank agreements.

Humanitarian Issues. The dimensions of this problem defy quantification at this early date, when we still do not know precisely what has happened inside Kosovo. But already we know that it will be far beyond anything Europe has seen since 1945:

--Housing and infrastructure have been destroyed. The rural population will not be able to re-establish itself before the planting season. Farm animals and wells have been destroyed. Winter is less than six months away. The costs will be staggering, higher than the highest current estimate. The international community will probably have to provide temporary housing for about one million people through the winter of 1999-2000, then provide security and a reconstruction program for years to come--an extraordinarily sad way, incidentally, to usher in the brave new millennium.

--Given this situation, we should consider immediately establishing a special high-level coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo, with authority to cut across interagency lines.

Regional Issues. The rest of the region will also need more attention, which will also be expensive. But the alternative is further instability and, ultimately, risks of further wars. Albania and Macedonia are, in different ways, close to the edge, and need immediate help far beyond what they are getting. The other near neighbors, plus Montenegro, have paid a huge price for the crisis, and also need assistance. And Bosnia must remain at the top of our agenda, since a setback there would raise questions about our entire policy.

Looking further down the road, there will also be a need to help with reconstruction within non-Kosovo Yugoslavia. It is clearly premature to think of helping the Serbs, yet in the long run building a viable, democratic Serbia is an essential goal for the European Union, Russia, and the United States.

Russia. The Russians seem to have realized that they should not let their own future be tied to the actions of a man who does not give a damn about them. The Secretary's successful Oslo talks, and the fact that the Russians have left their troops in Bosnia, are indications that Moscow is looking for ways to keep the strains within acceptable--and primarily rhetorical--limits, while dealing

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with its domestic opponents who are exploiting the issue.

While we need to work closely with Moscow, it is a dream to think they will bail us out. In fact, giving them a central role in a negotiation would probably backfire, because they would support compromises that would be unacceptable to us. Our public rejection of these proposals could then increase the strain between us. In short, we should keep in constant and close communication with Moscow, but not let them become deeply involved in a serious negotiation--for the sake of the U.S.-Russian relationship.

PART FOUR: Ground Troops.

We have been outmaneuvered by our critics on this issue, primarily because of three factors: first, the widespread theory that air campaigns alone never succeed; second, the general impatience of the public and the press; and third, the ability of Administration critics, especially Senator McCain, to hammer NATO for "not even having a plan."

The theory (almost universally held by the chattering classes and the Sunday pundits) that the air campaign has failed is not proven. While there are definitely limits to what air power alone can accomplish, it is too early to conclude that this campaign will not achieve its objectives, especially given the campaign's slow start. Comparisons are useful but can be misleading: in Vietnam most of the bombs fell in rural areas, and the economy was far less vulnerable to targeted bombing. In fact, there are already signs that the bombing is beginning to affect the thinking of business and leadership elements. Premature obituaries for the bombing will only drive the policy into a rush to a ground troop invasion--a step of historic import.

As for ground troops, our critics scored an easy point without having to support an invasion by hammering the lack of a plan. This has left the impression that we are opposed to rational and prudent planning. Yet a plan does not commit anyone; it is simply planning.

In fact, planning might highlight the costs and dangers of sending troops into Kosovo in a "non-permissive environment." Few advocates of sending ground troops into Kosovo have examined the potential costs and consequences of such a decision, which would be the most fateful any American President has taken since June-July 1965, when, after a week of intense secret debate, Lyndon Johnson told the American public that he would send 75,000 combat ground troops to Vietnam. Throughout the spring of 1965, Johnson had refused to discuss honestly with the Congress and the American public the situation, although the air war against North Vietnam had started in February. Before June, he literally tried to sneak military units into Vietnam under the fiction that they were not going into combat but merely protecting the air bases. All in all,

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it was probably the most devious act of any President in our time, with the most adverse consequences (including the beginning of an inflationary spiral at home.)

This is not, of course, an argument against the NATO-led peace-keeping force: one way or another, there will almost certainly be NATO ground troops in Kosovo later this year. And once there, they will stay a long time. But everything depends on whether they enter by invitation, along the lines of Dayton, with the formal agreement of the national authority in Belgrade--or whether they enter as an invasion force which will then become an occupation force. Talk about something in between a "permissive" and "non-permissive" force is wishful thinking; in the real world the troops are either invited in--which means low or no casualties--or they have to fight their way in. If they invade, they will not be able to stop in Kosovo; given the realities of the situation, they will have to pursue Serb forces deep into the rest of Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps as far as Belgrade itself. Under the permissive scenario, they should be able to restrict themselves to Kosovo (as well as Macedonia, Albania and perhaps Montenegro), and take low casualties as in Bosnia.

An invasion can, of course, succeed, but only at substantial cost. NATO is far too powerful, and the Serbs far too weak, to repel an invasion. If we undertake such a policy, we will surely prevail. But it could mean serious casualties, and at the end of the process NATO will "own" Yugoslavia, Albania, and Macedonia just as surely as the World War II victors owned Germany and Japan. They will have to occupy the land and defend themselves against possible attacks, including Somalia and Beirut-style terrorism. To be sure, even without an invasion NATO will be in the region for the indefinite future. But how they enter makes a huge difference. To put it somewhat melodramatically, will it be Dayton or D-Day?

PART FIVE: Summation

To summarize:

--Our most important goal should be to encourage a regime change.

--If that is not achieved before Milosevic makes a credible negotiating offer, then we should negotiate with someone other than him, in a site outside Yugoslavia.

--If Belgrade does not make a credible negotiating offer, we should intensify the bombing until it does.

--Bombing should continue during the negotiations.

--We should not compromise on our three core goals, but defer most political issues for a later date if necessary.

--We should make plans for a ground troop invasion of Kosovo, but recognize that it is a step from which there may be no exit.

--The planning effort should be made known to the public so as

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to allow its effect to be felt in Belgrade--and its costs and risks understood publicly.

--We should do more to deal with the worst humanitarian crisis Europe has seen since 1945, recognizing that it will get even worse once we gain access to Kosovo itself.

--We should start planning for trusteeship or protectorate status for Kosovo, and obtain full Contact Group endorsement for this general concept, without getting bogged down in the details.

To mention a few other important issues not covered in this memo:

--More economic pressure on Yugoslavia--as quickly as possible;

--More public information to reach the Serbs about what their troops are really doing in Kosovo: this is the area of greatest current urgency;

--Set up a separate operation for KLA handling; it is currently in danger of becoming an orphan of our policy, yet it will be critical.

--Finally, there is the question of justice. For some, especially the Kosovar Albanians, this will also be a search for revenge. We should not underestimate the anger that will exist after the war. Not only should we re-double our efforts on behalf of the War Crimes Tribunal now, but we must anticipate even greater demands for justice later. There will be fierce criticism of any negotiation with Milosevic, no matter what the deal. The world will demand justice for Milosevic after the war, if he is still alive.

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EYES ONLY~~SECRET~~~~SECRET~~*April 20, 1999*

MEMORANDUM TO: The Secretary of State
The National Security Advisor

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

1. Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behavior is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions--admittedly of a highly speculative nature--about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behavior was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities.

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This policy was well underway when events in Kosovo derailed everything on both sides. His dreams for rejoining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member is now gone forever.

As this realization sinks in, as it must already have, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map--and he surely knows it. He ~~is~~ will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia.

With this bleak prospect facing him--one I suspect he is beginning to understand--his behavior has shown little of its

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2/27/2017 KRBH

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previous cleverness or tactical flexibility. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox--short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends.

Perhaps for this reason--or because of some --Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the short run, but doom him in the long term. It is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible before he falls; no more creeping repression from Belgrade. Have deeply hostile psychological factors in his make-up taken over from his rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which was far detached from his anti-septic presidential surroundings. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behavior of this Milosevic is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result.

2. What About His Associates? They are not men of strength or courage. While they all owe their current positions to Milosevic, many of them have told Chris Hill, Wes Clark, and me over the years that they held views different from those of their leader. At times each tried to suggest to us that he held "softer," more reasonable views than Milosevic.

Nonetheless, they will want to save their own skins. Whatever their individual views on the sacredness of Serb soil in Kosovo, none are going to be ready to sacrifice themselves. I believe that the early signs of dissension within Serb ranks (and with Montenegro) are real, and probably reflect even greater unhappiness than we are aware of. This may be an exploitable opportunity, but must be handled with extreme care and confidentiality.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504

2988
LIMITED ACCESS

April 21, 1999

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR SAMUEL R. BERGER

FROM:

GREG SCHULTE *MS*

SUBJECT:

Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Slobodan Milosevic

At your request, I attach a short analysis of the two memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, written in the form of a covering memorandum to the President.

RECOMMENDATION

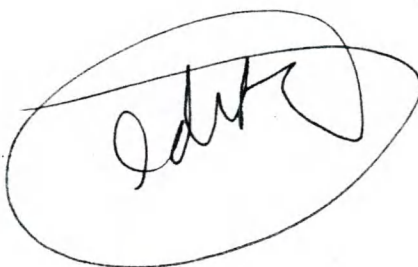
That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Attachments

Tab I Memorandum for the President

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan
Milosevic



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Reason: 1.5 (a), (d)

Declassify On: April 21, 2009

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E.O. 13526
White House Guidelines, May 16, 2017
By VL NARA, Date 5/6/2024
2008-0994-F3

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONINFORMATIONDECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526
2014-0547-M (1.22)
5/6/2024 VZ

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER

SUBJECT: Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Sloban Milosevic

I attach two thoughtful memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, one on next steps for Kosovo and the second on Slobodan Milosevic. He characterizes both as "works in progress."

In the first memoranda, Dick reviews the choices that both we and Milosevic face. Dick rules out ending the bombing without achieving our objectives; he also rules out sending ground troops into a potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation. His preferred choice is to intensify the bombing and continue until the Serbs change their position -- preferably by changing their leader. Indeed one of Dick's main conclusions is that our real goal should be regime change, even if this takes time.

Dick's conclusion faces us with a difficult dilemma if intensified bombing succeeds in causing Milosevic to seek a negotiated outcome. Can we negotiate with a man who is destined for indictment? Will negotiating with Milosevic give him new legitimacy and undercut efforts to change his regime? Faced with these questions, Dick recommends that we negotiate with someone other than Milosevic, at a site outside Yugoslavia. He further recommends that the United States control the negotiations, that we continue the bombing through the talks, and that we stick to our core goals but be ready to defer most political issues.

Dick's second memorandum addresses Milosevic himself and questions his mental stability. Dick suggests that Milosevic has adopted a policy that he now knows he cannot survive. His close associates probably understand this and might look for ways to save their own skins. Thus we should be watching for signs of dissension that we can exploit to achieve our aims with respect to Kosovo, as well as to support a change in regime.

~~SECRET~~Reason: 1.5 (a) (d)
Declassify On: 4/21/09cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

Indeed, we may already have detected initial signs of dissension, in the form of a recent message to Chris Hill from Nikolai Sainovic, the Serb security chief in Pristina, and a separate message from Vuk Draskovic, the one-time opposition leader and now Deputy Prime Minister, sent through a Serb-American associate of Milan Panic.

I agree with most of Dick's conclusions:

- We need to stick to our conditions, press forward with our air campaign and reinforce it with additional economic pressure. Despite those questioning the efficacy of airpower, it is much too early to consider any other course.
- We should plan for ground options in a "non-permissive" environment, but recognize the real risks involved, not only the problems associated with getting in, but the risks once we are there and the difficulty of getting out.
- The nature of an agreement has changed since Rambouillet. The focus should be on our core goals (Serb forces out, international security force in, refugees back) with agreement on the political arrangements deferred. This means preparing for an international administration of Kosovo that is nominally "interim" but likely to be lengthy unless there is a regime change in Belgrade.
- While difficult, we need to look for interlocutors other than Milosevic. This supports a policy of regime change. It also hedges against the risk that Milosevic has consciously chosen a suicidal course and will be unwilling to consider any type of agreement with the West.
- We need to do more to engage the Kosovar Albanians. State is now starting a more systematic effort to reach out to all members of the delegation from Rambouillet and to promote regular contacts with us and amongst themselves.

Dick also concludes that we should not rely too heavily on Moscow to help achieve a settlement. It is true that Primakov and Ivanov have done little more than to promote Belgrade's position. However, I believe that the involvement of Chernomyrdin offers a new opportunity that we should seek to exploit. However, we will need to avoid any temptation to compromise on our core goals with respect to Belgrade in order to accommodate Moscow.

Attachments

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

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~~SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

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April 20, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: RICHARD HOLBROOKE

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NEXT STEPS

As the bombing ends its fourth week, allow me to offer some thoughts on the choices that lie before us:

PART ONE: His Choices, Our Choices

I. Sloba's Choices. While we control the bombing, Milosevic controls the timing and nature of the first political/diplomatic response. However, none of his options are attractive:

--First choice: he refuses to blink--and continues his current defiance of NATO;

--Second choice: he accepts our terms, in effect, surrendering--or else is replaced by a group who accept our position;

--Third choice: having emptied most of Kosovo of Albanians, Milosevic announces that he is ready to negotiate and makes a half-serious offer in an effort to split the Alliance and the Contact Group.

II. Our Choices--keyed to his three choices:

1. In the event that Belgrade continues to stand up to the air campaign: We have three courses, broadly speaking:

--end the bombing without achieving our objectives. Result: Milosevic wins.

--send ground troops to Yugoslavia in a "non-permissive environment"--that is, invade and occupy at least part of Yugoslavia. Result: Potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation of large portion of Yugoslavia.

--continue to bomb. This leaves the situation unresolved--in effect, taking us back to the starting point of this memo.

If the Administration wishes to avoid being pushed by events into either defeat or invasion, the bombing must intensify--and continue until the Serbs change their position, preferably by changing their leader.

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2. In the event that Belgrade accepts our terms or loses power, then we achieve our objectives. Result: We win.

3. In the event that Milosevic makes a semi-serious offer that still falls short of our core goals, we will face some complicated decisions which could strain relations with our Contact Group and NATO colleagues:

--Should we negotiate with Milosevic at all? Dayton may have been a deal with the devil, but it ended a war on acceptable terms. Milosevic kept enough of his word, especially regarding no NATO/American casualties in Bosnia, so as to justify continued dealings with him. But at the same time he was re-legitimized and re-empowered politically, and he then strengthened his economy with big international deals.

--But after Kosovo he is not the same person he was after Dayton. Whatever the details of an agreement, his sole goals will be to retain power, retain Kosovo, and avoid punishment for his own deeds. Can we allow that after Kosovo? Can Milosevic, the most disruptive person in Europe in half a century, become the co-guarantor of Kosovo's future?

--After the war is over, the world is going to demand justice. There will be widespread public opposition to any deal, no matter how good, that leaves Milosevic in power. This time, the War Crimes Tribunal will need to be satisfied. We will not be able to let indicted war criminals run loose, as is the case with Karadzic and Mladic. And I assume that Louise Arbour will indict Milosevic.

Our real goal: Regime change. Our real goal, whether stated or not, must be a change in the leadership of Yugoslavia. While there is no hard information that suggests such an outcome, we should not preclude it. I have an instinct that Milosevic is finished, but cannot foresee how or when¹.

--Nothing in wartime is more difficult than effecting a regime change. Even Churchill ignored several promising opportunities to help anti-Hitler plotters. Milosevic, however, runs a "soft dictatorship," more like Marcos than Saddam or Ceaucescu. The Serbs are not the North Vietnamese or the Iraqis; Milosevic is not popular and Serb unity, while it may exist at the moment, is not a long-term Serb thing. The men around him might look for ways to distance themselves from him; one way to do this would be to re-open lines of communication with Western officials. However, it would require the active support of the Army and some powerful business interests to remove him. There is also the danger

¹ See separate memorandum, "Has Milosevic Lost His Mind?"

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that he might be replaced, at least at the outset, by an even harder line ultra-nationalist, but that is a risk worth taking.

While Milosevic's departure from power is the optimum outcome, policy must be based on the likelihood that he cannot be dislodged, at least not in the time frame we seek, and it may therefore become necessary to negotiate with his regime once again. Thus the current Administration position of remaining vague on the issue in public is correct.

If negotiating with him or a regime he still controls is unavoidable, here are some important considerations:

A. Bombing must continue while the discussions take place. Milosevic is certain to try to link the opening of talks to the cessation of bombing². The Russians and perhaps some of our NATO allies will support him, but we must be unyielding.

B. Should the talks be with Milosevic, or with a subordinate? We do not wish to enhance his stature by sitting down with him again, but as long as he is in power only he can actually make a deal. Nonetheless, it would be preferable to deal with other people, if possible--including close subordinates who might look for ways to save themselves.

C. Where should talks be held? Milosevic will never leave Yugoslavia again, for fear that he will either be arrested by the War Crimes Tribunal or overthrown while he is away. So direct talks with him would have to be in Belgrade while NATO is bombing--not a good arrangement.

D. Who should conduct these talks? We are, as usual, constrained by Alliance and Contact Group politics. We cannot exclude our partners, yet we cannot conduct a serious negotiation if they participate on an equal basis. A conference can be formally co-chaired by the United States, Russia and a single EU representative, but real negotiations must be conducted in private--without the press watching every step--by the United States, which can keep the others informed. The planes are mostly ours; same with the negotiations.

--It seems likely Milosevic will offer to negotiate with someone other than the United States--the Russians, Kofi Annan, Carl Bildt, the Greeks, the Ukrainians, the Chinese, etc. If he succeeds in such a ploy, we would be allowing other parties to determine what the air war was for--that is,

² The exact position the North Vietnamese took in 1965-68, incidentally.

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what our war aims are. This strikes me as unthinkable.

E. Where? This time around, the United States is probably out. France, which had its shot and botched it badly, should not be given a second chance. Moscow will surely offer its lovely hotels and conference rooms, but that would be absurd. Geneva reeks of history's failures, and it is virtually impossible to keep the press and the international community out of the way. A remote place somewhere in Europe that can be sealed off and controlled would have to be found.

--Given these considerations, my recommendation is that any talks with the Yugoslav government be conducted not with Milosevic, but outside Yugoslavia with empowered subordinates, while we continue to look for ways to undermine him or encourage his removal.

PART TWO: War Aims

NATO has been criticized for lack of clarity or precision about the purposes of the bombing. But this is neither surprising nor troubling in the early stages of such a fluid situation. War aims often evolve as facts on the ground change. In this case, the original stated aims of the bombing had to change once the atrocities became apparent.

The current statements of our goals seems correct to me. We should continue to stress the three most urgent: the refugees go home; the Yugoslav security forces leave; and an international security force moves into Kosovo in a permissive environment. In turn, the KLA must agree to a cease-fire. (Disarming them, a key part of Rambouillet, will be a more difficult matter.)

Of course, Milosevic's proposals will fall far short of these goals. He will seek conditions that discourage refugee return; insist on leaving some of his security and border forces and offer to return to either the October or the Rambouillet levels; and oppose any international security force, then offer to allow one that has no NATO troops. All these ploys, and others too numerous to anticipate, should be rejected.

As for the political issues, which are more complex, we are unlikely to settle them in the first phase of negotiations, although we should try to make as much progress as possible. Rambouillet will no longer satisfy the KLA, which is now in substantial control of the Kosovar political situation. But most of the principles of Rambouillet are still valid, and should be part of the general framework agreement that accompanies the end of the bombing.

PART THREE: The Post-bombing Status of Kosovo and other Considerations.

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The post-bombing status of Kosovo might be a Trusteeship, under Chapter VII authority from the UN Security Council. This would not formally change the international status of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia, but it would remove it from the political control of Belgrade for a specified period of time. Partition of Kosovo strikes me as a bad idea, but I would not rule out completely the possibility of dividing Kosovo into different zones of temporary control, along the lines of the West Bank agreements.

Humanitarian Issues. The dimensions of this problem defy quantification at this early date, when we still do not know precisely what has happened inside Kosovo. But already we know that it will be far beyond anything Europe has seen since 1945:

--Housing and infrastructure have been destroyed. The rural population will not be able to re-establish itself before the planting season. Farm animals and wells have been destroyed. Winter is less than six months away. The costs will be staggering, higher than the highest current estimate. The international community will probably have to provide temporary housing for about one million people through the winter of 1999-2000, then provide security and a reconstruction program for years to come--an extraordinarily sad way, incidentally, to usher in the brave new millennium.

--Given this situation, we should consider immediately establishing a special high-level coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo, with authority to cut across interagency lines.

Regional Issues. The rest of the region will also need more attention, which will also be expensive. But the alternative is further instability and, ultimately, risks of further wars. Albania and Macedonia are, in different ways, close to the edge, and need immediate help far beyond what they are getting. The other near neighbors, plus Montenegro, have paid a huge price for the crisis, and also need assistance. And Bosnia must remain at the top of our agenda, since a setback there would raise questions about our entire policy.

Looking further down the road, there will also be a need to help with reconstruction within non-Kosovo Yugoslavia. It is clearly premature to think of helping the Serbs, yet in the long run building a viable, democratic Serbia is an essential goal for the European Union, Russia, and the United States.

Russia. The Russians seem to have realized that they should not let their own future be tied to the actions of a man who does not give a damn about them. The Secretary's successful Oslo talks, and the fact that the Russians have left their troops in Bosnia, are indications that Moscow is looking for ways to keep the strains within acceptable--and primarily rhetorical--limits, while dealing

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with its domestic opponents who are exploiting the issue.

While we need to work closely with Moscow, it is a dream to think they will bail us out. In fact, giving them a central role in a negotiation would probably backfire, because they would support compromises that would be unacceptable to us. Our public rejection of these proposals could then increase the strain between us. In short, we should keep in constant and close communication with Moscow, but not let them become deeply involved in a serious negotiation--for the sake of the U.S.-Russian relationship.

PART FOUR: Ground Troops.

We have been outmaneuvered by our critics on this issue, primarily because of three factors: first, the widespread theory that air campaigns alone never succeed; second, the general impatience of the public and the press; and third, the ability of Administration critics, especially Senator McCain, to hammer NATO for "not even having a plan."

The theory (almost universally held by the chattering classes and the Sunday pundits) that the air campaign has failed is not proven. While there are definitely limits to what air power alone can accomplish, it is too early to conclude that this campaign will not achieve its objectives, especially given the campaign's slow start. Comparisons are useful but can be misleading: in Vietnam most of the bombs fell in rural areas, and the economy was far less vulnerable to targeted bombing. In fact, there are already signs that the bombing is beginning to affect the thinking of business and leadership elements. Premature obituaries for the bombing will only drive the policy into a rush to a ground troop invasion--a step of historic import.

As for ground troops, our critics scored an easy point without having to support an invasion by hammering the lack of a plan. This has left the impression that we are opposed to rational and prudent planning. Yet a plan does not commit anyone; it is simply planning.

In fact, planning might highlight the costs and dangers of sending troops into Kosovo in a "non-permissive environment." Few advocates of sending ground troops into Kosovo have examined the potential costs and consequences of such a decision, which would be the most fateful any American President has taken since June-July 1965, when, after a week of intense secret debate, Lyndon Johnson told the American public that he would send 75,000 combat ground troops to Vietnam. Throughout the spring of 1965, Johnson had refused to discuss honestly with the Congress and the American public the situation, although the air war against North Vietnam had started in February. Before June, he literally tried to sneak military units into Vietnam under the fiction that they were not going into combat but merely protecting the air bases. All in all,

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it was probably the most devious act of any President in our time, with the most adverse consequences (including the beginning of an inflationary spiral at home.)

This is not, of course, an argument against the NATO-led peace-keeping force: one way or another, there will almost certainly be NATO ground troops in Kosovo later this year. And once there, they will stay a long time. But everything depends on whether they enter by invitation, along the lines of Dayton, with the formal agreement of the national authority in Belgrade--or whether they enter as an invasion force which will then become an occupation force. Talk about something in between a "permissive" and "non-permissive" force is wishful thinking; in the real world the troops are either invited in--which means low or no casualties--or they have to fight their way in. If they invade, they will not be able to stop in Kosovo; given the realities of the situation, they will have to pursue Serb forces deep into the rest of Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps as far as Belgrade itself. Under the permissive scenario, they should be able to restrict themselves to Kosovo (as well as Macedonia, Albania and perhaps Montenegro), and take low casualties as in Bosnia.

An invasion can, of course, succeed, but only at substantial cost. NATO is far too powerful, and the Serbs far too weak, to repel an invasion. If we undertake such a policy, we will surely prevail. But it could mean serious casualties, and at the end of the process NATO will "own" Yugoslavia, Albania, and Macedonia just as surely as the World War II victors owned Germany and Japan. They will have to occupy the land and defend themselves against possible attacks, including Somalia and Beirut-style terrorism. To be sure, even without an invasion NATO will be in the region for the indefinite future. But how they enter makes a huge difference. To put it somewhat melodramatically, will it be Dayton or D-Day?

PART FIVE: Summation

To summarize:

- Our most important goal should be to encourage a regime change.
- If that is not achieved before Milosevic makes a credible negotiating offer, then we should negotiate with someone other than him, in a site outside Yugoslavia.
- If Belgrade does not make a credible negotiating offer, we should intensify the bombing until it does.
- Bombing should continue during the negotiations.
- We should not compromise on our three core goals, but defer most political issues for a later date if necessary.
- We should make plans for a ground troop invasion of Kosovo, but recognize that it is a step from which there may be no exit.
- The planning effort should be made known to the public so as

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to allow its effect to be felt in Belgrade--and its costs and risks understood publicly.

--We should do more to deal with the worst humanitarian crisis Europe has seen since 1945, recognizing that it will get even worse once we gain access to Kosovo itself.

--We should start planning for trusteeship or protectorate status for Kosovo, and obtain full Contact Group endorsement for this general concept, without getting bogged down in the details.

*** *** *** *** ***

To mention a few other important issues not covered in this memo:

--More economic pressure on Yugoslavia--as quickly as possible;

--More public information to reach the Serbs about what their troops are really doing in Kosovo: this is the area of greatest current urgency;

--Set up a separate operation for KLA handling; it is currently in danger of becoming an orphan of our policy, yet it will be critical.

--Finally, there is the question of justice. For some, especially the Kosovar Albanians, this will also be a search for revenge. We should not underestimate the anger that will exist after the war. Not only should we re-double our efforts on behalf of the War Crimes Tribunal now, but we must anticipate even greater demands for justice later. There will be fierce criticism of any negotiation with Milosevic, no matter what the deal. The world will demand justice for Milosevic after the war, if he is still alive.

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EYES ONLY~~SECRET~~~~SECRET~~*April 20, 1999*

MEMORANDUM TO: The Secretary of State
The National Security Advisor

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

1. Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behavior is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions--admittedly of a highly speculative nature--about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behavior was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some of the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities.

At first he made real progress toward these goals. Most of the EU recognized Yugoslavia over our objections. The Italians and Greeks made a grotesque (but potentially profitable) deal with him for a large stake in the state telecom company, netting about \$1 billion in cash to him, money he could use to pay the army, bribe people, and perhaps move partly off-shore for his own uses and future protection. The United States and the Contact Group offered him a "road map" in which in return for full implementation of Dayton he would get the "outer wall" sanctions lifted or suspended on a rolling basis.

This policy was well underway when events in Kosovo derailed everything on both sides. His dreams for rejoining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member is now gone forever.

As this realization sinks in, as it must already have, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map--and he surely knows it. He ~~is~~ will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia.

With this bleak prospect facing him--one I suspect he is beginning to understand--his behavior has shown little of its

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2/27/2019 KBN

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previous cleverness or tactical flexibility. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox--short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends.

Perhaps for this reason--or because of some --Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the short run, but doom him in the long term. It is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible before he falls; no more creeping repression from Belgrade. Have deeply hostile psychological factors in his make-up taken over from his rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which was far detached from his anti-septic presidential surroundings. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behavior of this Milosevic is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504

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LIMITED ACCESS

April 21, 1999

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR SAMUEL R. BERGER

FROM: GREG SCHULTE *MS*

SUBJECT: Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Slobodan Milosevic

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RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Attachments

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Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan
Milosevic



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Reason: 1.5 (a), (d)

Declassify On: April 21, 2009

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526
White House Guidelines, May 16, 2017
By VL NARA, Date 5/6/2024
2008-0974-F3

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONINFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER

SUBJECT: Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Sloban Milosevic

DECLASSIFIED

PER E.O. 13526

2017-0547 -u (1.22)
5/6/2024 KB4

I attach two thoughtful memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, one on next steps for Kosovo and the second on Slobodan Milosevic. He characterizes both as "works in progress."

In the first memoranda, Dick reviews the choices that both we and Milosevic face. Dick rules out ending the bombing without achieving our objectives; he also rules out sending ground troops into a potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation. His preferred choice is to intensify the bombing and continue until the Serbs change their position -- preferably by changing their leader. Indeed one of Dick's main conclusions is that our real goal should be regime change, even if this takes time.

Dick's conclusion faces us with a difficult dilemma if intensified bombing succeeds in causing Milosevic to seek a negotiated outcome. Can we negotiate with a man who is destined for indictment? Will negotiating with Milosevic give him new legitimacy and undercut efforts to change his regime? Faced with these questions, Dick recommends that we negotiate with someone other than Milosevic, at a site outside Yugoslavia. He further recommends that the United States control the negotiations, that we continue the bombing through the talks, and that we stick to our core goals but be ready to defer most political issues.

Dick's second memorandum addresses Milosevic himself and questions his mental stability. Dick suggests that Milosevic has adopted a policy that he now knows he cannot survive. His close associates probably understand this and might look for ways to save their own skins. Thus we should be watching for signs of dissension that we can exploit to achieve our aims with respect to Kosovo, as well as to support a change in regime.

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Reason: 1.5 (a) (d)
Declassify On: 4/21/09

cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

Indeed, we may already have detected initial signs of dissension, in the form of a recent message to Chris Hill from Nikolai Sainovic, the Serb security chief in Pristina, and a separate message from Vuk Draskovic, the one-time opposition leader and now Deputy Prime Minister, sent through a Serb-American associate of Milan Panic.

I agree with most of Dick's conclusions:

- We need to stick to our conditions, press forward with our air campaign and reinforce it with additional economic pressure. Despite those questioning the efficacy of airpower, it is much too early to consider any other course.
- We should plan for ground options in a "non-permissive" environment, but recognize the real risks involved, not only the problems associated with getting in, but the risks once we are there and the difficulty of getting out.
- The nature of an agreement has changed since Rambouillet. The focus should be on our core goals (Serb forces out, international security force in, refugees back) with agreement on the political arrangements deferred. This means preparing for an international administration of Kosovo that is nominally "interim" but likely to be lengthy unless there is a regime change in Belgrade.
- While difficult, we need to look for interlocutors other than Milosevic. This supports a policy of regime change. It also hedges against the risk that Milosevic has consciously chosen a suicidal course and will be unwilling to consider any type of agreement with the West.
- We need to do more to engage the Kosovar Albanians. State is now starting a more systematic effort to reach out to all members of the delegation from Rambouillet and to promote regular contacts with us and amongst themselves.

Dick also concludes that we should not rely too heavily on Moscow to help achieve a settlement. It is true that Primakov and Ivanov have done little more than to promote Belgrade's position. However, I believe that the involvement of Chernomyrdin offers a new opportunity that we should seek to exploit. However, we will need to avoid any temptation to compromise on our core goals with respect to Belgrade in order to accommodate Moscow.

Attachments

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps
Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

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April 20, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: RICHARD HOLBROOKE

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NEXT STEPS

As the bombing ends its fourth week, allow me to offer some thoughts on the choices that lie before us:

PART ONE: His Choices, Our Choices

I. Sloba's Choices. While we control the bombing, Milosevic controls the timing and nature of the first political/diplomatic response. However, none of his options are attractive:

--First choice: he refuses to blink--and continues his current defiance of NATO;

--Second choice: he accepts our terms, in effect, surrendering--or else is replaced by a group who accept our position;

--Third choice: having emptied most of Kosovo of Albanians, Milosevic announces that he is ready to negotiate and makes a half-serious offer in an effort to split the Alliance and the Contact Group.

II. Our Choices--keyed to his three choices:

1. In the event that Belgrade continues to stand up to the air campaign: We have three courses, broadly speaking:

--end the bombing without achieving our objectives. Result: Milosevic wins.

--send ground troops to Yugoslavia in a "non-permissive environment"--that is, invade and occupy at least part of Yugoslavia. Result: Potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation of large portion of Yugoslavia.

--continue to bomb. This leaves the situation unresolved--in effect, taking us back to the starting point of this memo.

If the Administration wishes to avoid being pushed by events into either defeat or invasion, the bombing must intensify--and continue until the Serbs change their position, preferably by changing their leader.

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2. In the event that Belgrade accepts our terms or loses power, then we achieve our objectives. Result: We win.

3. In the event that Milosevic makes a semi-serious offer that still falls short of our core goals, we will face some complicated decisions which could strain relations with our Contact Group and NATO colleagues:

--Should we negotiate with Milosevic at all? Dayton may have been a deal with the devil, but it ended a war on acceptable terms. Milosevic kept enough of his word, especially regarding no NATO/American casualties in Bosnia, so as to justify continued dealings with him. But at the same time he was re-legitimized and re-empowered politically, and he then strengthened his economy with big international deals.

--But after Kosovo he is not the same person he was after Dayton. Whatever the details of an agreement, his sole goals will be to retain power, retain Kosovo, and avoid punishment for his own deeds. Can we allow that after Kosovo? Can Milosevic, the most disruptive person in Europe in half a century, become the co-guarantor of Kosovo's future?

--After the war is over, the world is going to demand justice. There will be widespread public opposition to any deal, no matter how good, that leaves Milosevic in power. This time, the War Crimes Tribunal will need to be satisfied. We will not be able to let indicted war criminals run loose, as is the case with Karadzic and Mladic. And I assume that Louise Arbour will indict Milosevic.

Our real goal: Regime change. Our real goal, whether stated or not, must be a change in the leadership of Yugoslavia. While there is no hard information that suggests such an outcome, we should not preclude it. I have an instinct that Milosevic is finished, but cannot foresee how or when¹.

--Nothing in wartime is more difficult than effecting a regime change. Even Churchill ignored several promising opportunities to help anti-Hitler plotters. Milosevic, however, runs a "soft dictatorship," more like Marcos than Saddam or Ceaucescu. The Serbs are not the North Vietnamese or the Iraqis; Milosevic is not popular and Serb unity, while it may exist at the moment, is not a long-term Serb thing. The men around him might look for ways to distance themselves from him; one way to do this would be to re-open lines of communication with Western officials. However, it would require the active support of the Army and some powerful business interests to remove him. There is also the danger

¹ See separate memorandum, "Has Milosevic Lost His Mind?"

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that he might be replaced, at least at the outset, by an even harder line ultra-nationalist, but that is a risk worth taking.

While Milosevic's departure from power is the optimum outcome, policy must be based on the likelihood that he cannot be dislodged, at least not in the time frame we seek, and it may therefore become necessary to negotiate with his regime once again. Thus the current Administration position of remaining vague on the issue in public is correct.

If negotiating with him or a regime he still controls is unavoidable, here are some important considerations:

A. Bombing must continue while the discussions take place. Milosevic is certain to try to link the opening of talks to the cessation of bombing². The Russians and perhaps some of our NATO allies will support him, but we must be unyielding.

B. Should the talks be with Milosevic, or with a subordinate? We do not wish to enhance his stature by sitting down with him again, but as long as he is in power only he can actually make a deal. Nonetheless, it would be preferable to deal with other people, if possible--including close subordinates who might look for ways to save themselves.

C. Where should talks be held? Milosevic will never leave Yugoslavia again, for fear that he will either be arrested by the War Crimes Tribunal or overthrown while he is away. So direct talks with him would have to be in Belgrade while NATO is bombing--not a good arrangement.

D. Who should conduct these talks? We are, as usual, constrained by Alliance and Contact Group politics. We cannot exclude our partners, yet we cannot conduct a serious negotiation if they participate on an equal basis. A conference can be formally co-chaired by the United States, Russia and a single EU representative, but real negotiations must be conducted in private--without the press watching every step--by the United States, which can keep the others informed. The planes are mostly ours; same with the negotiations.

--It seems likely Milosevic will offer to negotiate with someone other than the United States--the Russians, Kofi Annan, Carl Bildt, the Greeks, the Ukrainians, the Chinese, etc. If he succeeds in such a ploy, we would be allowing other parties to determine what the air war was for--that is,

² The exact position the North Vietnamese took in 1965-68, incidentally.

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what our war aims are. This strikes me as unthinkable.

E. Where? This time around, the United States is probably out. France, which had its shot and botched it badly, should not be given a second chance. Moscow will surely offer its lovely hotels and conference rooms, but that would be absurd. Geneva reeks of history's failures, and it is virtually impossible to keep the press and the international community out of the way. A remote place somewhere in Europe that can be sealed off and controlled would have to be found.

--Given these considerations, my recommendation is that any talks with the Yugoslav government be conducted not with Milosevic, but outside Yugoslavia with empowered subordinates, while we continue to look for ways to undermine him or encourage his removal.

PART TWO: War Aims

NATO has been criticized for lack of clarity or precision about the purposes of the bombing. But this is neither surprising nor troubling in the early stages of such a fluid situation. War aims often evolve as facts on the ground change. In this case, the original stated aims of the bombing had to change once the atrocities became apparent.

The current statements of our goals seems correct to me. We should continue to stress the three most urgent: the refugees go home; the Yugoslav security forces leave; and an international security force moves into Kosovo in a permissive environment. In turn, the KLA must agree to a cease-fire. (Disarming them, a key part of Rambouillet, will be a more difficult matter.)

Of course, Milosevic's proposals will fall far short of these goals. He will seek conditions that discourage refugee return; insist on leaving some of his security and border forces and offer to return to either the October or the Rambouillet levels; and oppose any international security force, then offer to allow one that has no NATO troops. All these ploys, and others too numerous to anticipate, should be rejected.

As for the political issues, which are more complex, we are unlikely to settle them in the first phase of negotiations, although we should try to make as much progress as possible. Rambouillet will no longer satisfy the KLA, which is now in substantial control of the Kosovar political situation. But most of the principles of Rambouillet are still valid, and should be part of the general framework agreement that accompanies the end of the bombing.

PART THREE: The Post-bombing Status of Kosovo and other Considerations.

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The post-bombing status of Kosovo might be a Trusteeship, under Chapter VII authority from the UN Security Council. This would not formally change the international status of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia, but it would remove it from the political control of Belgrade for a specified period of time. Partition of Kosovo strikes me as a bad idea, but I would not rule out completely the possibility of dividing Kosovo into different zones of temporary control, along the lines of the West Bank agreements.

Humanitarian Issues. The dimensions of this problem defy quantification at this early date, when we still do not know precisely what has happened inside Kosovo. But already we know that it will be far beyond anything Europe has seen since 1945:

--Housing and infrastructure have been destroyed. The rural population will not be able to re-establish itself before the planting season. Farm animals and wells have been destroyed. Winter is less than six months away. The costs will be staggering, higher than the highest current estimate. The international community will probably have to provide temporary housing for about one million people through the winter of 1999-2000, then provide security and a reconstruction program for years to come--an extraordinarily sad way, incidentally, to usher in the brave new millennium.

--Given this situation, we should consider immediately establishing a special high-level coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo, with authority to cut across interagency lines.

Regional Issues. The rest of the region will also need more attention, which will also be expensive. But the alternative is further instability and, ultimately, risks of further wars. Albania and Macedonia are, in different ways, close to the edge, and need immediate help far beyond what they are getting. The other near neighbors, plus Montenegro, have paid a huge price for the crisis, and also need assistance. And Bosnia must remain at the top of our agenda, since a setback there would raise questions about our entire policy.

Looking further down the road, there will also be a need to help with reconstruction within non-Kosovo Yugoslavia. It is clearly premature to think of helping the Serbs, yet in the long run building a viable, democratic Serbia is an essential goal for the European Union, Russia, and the United States.

Russia. The Russians seem to have realized that they should not let their own future be tied to the actions of a man who does not give a damn about them. The Secretary's successful Oslo talks, and the fact that the Russians have left their troops in Bosnia, are indications that Moscow is looking for ways to keep the strains within acceptable--and primarily rhetorical--limits, while dealing

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with its domestic opponents who are exploiting the issue.

While we need to work closely with Moscow, it is a dream to think they will bail us out. In fact, giving them a central role in a negotiation would probably backfire, because they would support compromises that would be unacceptable to us. Our public rejection of these proposals could then increase the strain between us. In short, we should keep in constant and close communication with Moscow, but not let them become deeply involved in a serious negotiation--for the sake of the U.S.-Russian relationship.

PART FOUR: Ground Troops.

We have been outmaneuvered by our critics on this issue, primarily because of three factors: first, the widespread theory that air campaigns alone never succeed; second, the general impatience of the public and the press; and third, the ability of Administration critics, especially Senator McCain, to hammer NATO for "not even having a plan."

The theory (almost universally held by the chattering classes and the Sunday pundits) that the air campaign has failed is not proven. While there are definitely limits to what air power alone can accomplish, it is too early to conclude that this campaign will not achieve its objectives, especially given the campaign's slow start. Comparisons are useful but can be misleading: in Vietnam most of the bombs fell in rural areas, and the economy was far less vulnerable to targeted bombing. In fact, there are already signs that the bombing is beginning to affect the thinking of business and leadership elements. Premature obituaries for the bombing will only drive the policy into a rush to a ground troop invasion--a step of historic import.

As for ground troops, our critics scored an easy point without having to support an invasion by hammering the lack of a plan. This has left the impression that we are opposed to rational and prudent planning. Yet a plan does not commit anyone; it is simply planning.

In fact, planning might highlight the costs and dangers of sending troops into Kosovo in a "non-permissive environment." Few advocates of sending ground troops into Kosovo have examined the potential costs and consequences of such a decision, which would be the most fateful any American President has taken since June-July 1965, when, after a week of intense secret debate, Lyndon Johnson told the American public that he would send 75,000 combat ground troops to Vietnam. Throughout the spring of 1965, Johnson had refused to discuss honestly with the Congress and the American public the situation, although the air war against North Vietnam had started in February. Before June, he literally tried to sneak military units into Vietnam under the fiction that they were not going into combat but merely protecting the air bases. All in all,

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it was probably the most devious act of any President in our time, with the most adverse consequences (including the beginning of an inflationary spiral at home.)

This is not, of course, an argument against the NATO-led peace-keeping force: one way or another, there will almost certainly be NATO ground troops in Kosovo later this year. And once there, they will stay a long time. But everything depends on whether they enter by invitation, along the lines of Dayton, with the formal agreement of the national authority in Belgrade--or whether they enter as an invasion force which will then become an occupation force. Talk about something in between a "permissive" and "non-permissive" force is wishful thinking; in the real world the troops are either invited in--which means low or no casualties--or they have to fight their way in. If they invade, they will not be able to stop in Kosovo; given the realities of the situation, they will have to pursue Serb forces deep into the rest of Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps as far as Belgrade itself. Under the permissive scenario, they should be able to restrict themselves to Kosovo (as well as Macedonia, Albania and perhaps Montenegro), and take low casualties as in Bosnia.

An invasion can, of course, succeed, but only at substantial cost. NATO is far too powerful, and the Serbs far too weak, to repel an invasion. If we undertake such a policy, we will surely prevail. But it could mean serious casualties, and at the end of the process NATO will "own" Yugoslavia, Albania, and Macedonia just as surely as the World War II victors owned Germany and Japan. They will have to occupy the land and defend themselves against possible attacks, including Somalia and Beirut-style terrorism. To be sure, even without an invasion NATO will be in the region for the indefinite future. But how they enter makes a huge difference. To put it somewhat melodramatically, will it be Dayton or D-Day?

PART FIVE: Summation

To summarize:

--Our most important goal should be to encourage a regime change.

--If that is not achieved before Milosevic makes a credible negotiating offer, then we should negotiate with someone other than him, in a site outside Yugoslavia.

--If Belgrade does not make a credible negotiating offer, we should intensify the bombing until it does.

--Bombing should continue during the negotiations.

--We should not compromise on our three core goals, but defer most political issues for a later date if necessary.

--We should make plans for a ground troop invasion of Kosovo, but recognize that it is a step from which there may be no exit.

--The planning effort should be made known to the public so as

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to allow its effect to be felt in Belgrade--and its costs and risks understood publicly.

--We should do more to deal with the worst humanitarian crisis Europe has seen since 1945, recognizing that it will get even worse once we gain access to Kosovo itself.

--We should start planning for trusteeship or protectorate status for Kosovo, and obtain full Contact Group endorsement for this general concept, without getting bogged down in the details.

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To mention a few other important issues not covered in this memo:

--More economic pressure on Yugoslavia--as quickly as possible;

--More public information to reach the Serbs about what their troops are really doing in Kosovo: this is the area of greatest current urgency;

--Set up a separate operation for KLA handling; it is currently in danger of becoming an orphan of our policy, yet it will be critical.

--Finally, there is the question of justice. For some, especially the Kosovar Albanians, this will also be a search for revenge. We should not underestimate the anger that will exist after the war. Not only should we re-double our efforts on behalf of the War Crimes Tribunal now, but we must anticipate even greater demands for justice later. There will be fierce criticism of any negotiation with Milosevic, no matter what the deal. The world will demand justice for Milosevic after the war, if he is still alive.

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EYES ONLY~~SECRET~~~~SECRET~~*April 20, 1999*

MEMORANDUM TO: The Secretary of State
The National Security Advisor

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

1. Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behavior is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions--admittedly of a highly speculative nature--about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behavior was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some of the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities.

At first he made real progress toward these goals. Most of the EU recognized Yugoslavia over our objections. The Italians and Greeks made a grotesque (but potentially profitable) deal with him for a large stake in the state telecom company, netting about \$1 billion in cash to him, money he could use to pay the army, bribe people, and perhaps move partly off-shore for his own uses and future protection. The United States and the Contact Group offered him a "road map" in which in return for full implementation of Dayton he would get the "outer wall" sanctions lifted or suspended on a rolling basis.

This policy was well underway when events in Kosovo derailed everything on both sides. His dreams for rejoining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member is now gone forever.

As this realization sinks in, as it must already have, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map--and he surely knows it. He ~~is~~ will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia.

With this bleak prospect facing him--one I suspect he is beginning to understand--his behavior has shown little of its

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previous cleverness or tactical flexibility. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox--short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends.

Perhaps for this reason--or because of some --Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the short run, but doom him in the long term. It is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible before he falls; no more creeping repression from Belgrade. Have deeply hostile psychological factors in his make-up taken over from his rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which was far detached from his anti-septic presidential surroundings. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behavior of this Milosevic is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result.

2. What About His Associates? They are not men of strength or courage. While they all owe their current positions to Milosevic, many of them have told Chris Hill, Wes Clark, and me over the years that they held views different from those of their leader. At times each tried to suggest to us that he held "softer," more reasonable views than Milosevic.

Nonetheless, they will want to save their own skins. Whatever their individual views on the sacredness of Serb soil in Kosovo, none are going to be ready to sacrifice themselves. I believe that the early signs of dissension within Serb ranks (and with Montenegro) are real, and probably reflect even greater unhappiness than we are aware of. This may be an exploitable opportunity, but must be handled with extreme care and confidentiality.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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National Security Council
The White House

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cc:

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COMMENTS:

*Halbrodke's Thought re
Kosovo and Milosevic*

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER

SUBJECT: Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Sloban Milosevic

I attach two thoughtful memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, one on next steps for Kosovo and the second on Slobodan Milosevic. He characterizes both as "works in progress."

In the first memoranda, Dick reviews the choices that both we and Milosevic face. Dick rules out ending the bombing without achieving our objectives; he also rules out sending ground troops into a potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation. His preferred choice is to intensify the bombing and continue until the Serbs change their position -- preferably by changing their leader. Indeed one of Dick's main conclusions is that our real goal should be regime change, even if this takes time.

Dick's conclusion faces us with a difficult dilemma if intensified bombing succeeds in causing Milosevic to seek a negotiated outcome. Can we negotiate with a man who is destined for indictment? Will negotiating with Milosevic give him new legitimacy and undercut efforts to change his regime? Faced with these questions, Dick recommends that we negotiate with someone other than Milosevic, at a site outside Yugoslavia. He further recommends that the United States control the negotiations, that we continue the bombing through the talks, and that we stick to our core goals but be ready to defer most political issues.

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Reason: 1.5 (a) (d)
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cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

respect to Kosovo, as well as to support a change in regime. Indeed, we may already have detected initial signs of dissension, in the form of a recent message to Chris Hill from Nikolai Sainovic, the Serb security chief in Pristina, and a separate message from Vuk Draskovic, the one-time opposition leader and now Deputy Prime Minister, sent through a Serb-American associate of Milan Panic.

I agree with most of Dick's conclusions:

- We need to stick to our conditions, press forward with our air campaign and reinforce it with additional economic pressure. Despite those questioning the efficacy of airpower, it is much too early to consider any other course.
- We should plan for ground options in a "non-permissive" environment, but recognize the real risks involved. We may be deploying ground forces into Kosovo later this year, and it is much preferable to do so to implement an agreement rather than to impose an occupation.
- The nature of an agreement has changed since Rambouillet. The focus should be on our core goals (Serb forces out, international security force in, refugees back) with agreement on the political arrangements deferred. This means preparing for an international administration of Kosovo that is nominally "interim" but likely to be lengthy.
- While difficult, we need to look for interlocutors other than Milosevic. This supports a policy of regime change. It also hedges against the risk that Milosevic has consciously chosen a suicidal course and will be unwilling to consider any type of agreement with the West.
- We need to do more to engage the Kosovar Albanians. State is now starting a more systematic effort to reach out to all members of the delegation from Rambouillet and to promote regular contacts with us and amongst themselves.

Dick also concludes that we should not rely too heavily on Moscow to help achieve a settlement. It is true that Primakov and Ivanov have done little more than to promote Belgrade's position. However, I believe that the involvement of Chernomyrdin offers a new opportunity that we should seek to

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Attachments

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: The Next Steps
Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic ✓

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504

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LIMITED ACCESS

April 21, 1999

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR SAMUEL R. BERGER

FROM:

GREG SCHULTE *h/*

SUBJECT:

Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Slobodan Milosevic

At your request, I attach a short analysis of the two memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, written in the form of a covering memorandum to the President.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Attachments

Tab I Memorandum for the President

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thoughts about Slobodan
Milosevic

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Reason: 1.5 (a), (d)

Declassify On: April 21, 2009

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E.O. 13526
White House Guidelines, May 16, 2017
By *VL* NARA, Date *5/6/2024*
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONINFORMATION**DECLASSIFIED**
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER

SUBJECT: Richard Holbrooke's Thoughts on Kosovo and
Soloban Milosevic

I attach two thoughtful memoranda from Dick Holbrooke, one on next steps for Kosovo and the second on Slobodan Milosevic. He characterizes both as "works in progress."

In the first memoranda, Dick reviews the choices that both we and Milosevic face. Dick rules out ending the bombing without achieving our objectives; he also rules out sending ground troops into a potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation. His preferred choice is to intensify the bombing and continue until the Serbs change their position -- preferably by changing their leader. Indeed one of Dick's main conclusions is that our real goal should be regime change, even if this takes time.

Dick's conclusion faces us with a difficult dilemma if intensified bombing succeeds in causing Milosevic to seek a negotiated outcome. Can we negotiate with a man who is destined for indictment? Will negotiating with Milosevic give him new legitimacy and undercut efforts to change his regime? Faced with these questions, Dick recommends that we negotiate with someone other than Milosevic, at a site outside Yugoslavia. He further recommends that the United States control the negotiations, that we continue the bombing through the talks, and that we stick to our core goals but be ready to defer most political issues.

Dick's second memorandum addresses Milosevic himself and questions his mental stability. Dick suggests that Milosevic has adopted a policy that he now knows he cannot survive. His close associates probably understand this and might look for ways to save their own skins. Thus we should be watching for signs of dissension that we can exploit to achieve our aims with

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Declassify On: April 21, 2009

cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

respect to Kosovo, as well as to support a change in regime. Indeed, we may already have detected initial signs of dissension, in the form of a recent message to Chris Hill from Nikolai Sainovic, the Serb security chief in Pristine, and a separate message from Vuk Draskovic, the one-time opposition leader and now Deputy Prime Minister, sent through a Serb-American associate of Milan Panic.

I agree with most of Dick's conclusions:

- We need to stick to our conditions, press forward with our air campaign and reinforce it with additional economic pressure. Despite those questioning the efficacy of airpower, it is much too early to consider any other course.
- We should plan for ground options in a "non-permissive" environment, but recognize the real risks involved. We may be deploying ground forces into Kosovo later this year, and it is much preferable to do so to implement an agreement rather than to impose an occupation.
- The nature of an agreement has changed since Rambouillet. The focus should be on our core goals (Serb forces out, international security force in, refugees back) with agreement on the political arrangements deferred. This means preparing for an international administration of Kosovo that is nominally "interim" but likely to be lengthy.
- While difficult, we need to look for interlocutors other than Milosevic. This supports a policy of regime change. It also hedges against the risk that Milosevic has consciously chosen a suicidal course and will be unwilling to consider any type of agreement with the West.
- We need to do more to engage the Kosovar Albanians. State is now starting a more systematic effort to reach out to all members of the delegation from Rambouillet and to promote regular contacts with us and amongst themselves.

Dick also concludes that we should not rely too heavily on Moscow to help achieve a settlement. It is true that Primakov and Ivanov have done little more than to promote Belgrade's position. However, I believe that the involvement of Chernomyrdin offers a new opportunity that we should seek to

exploit. However, we will need to avoid any temptation to compromise on our core goals with respect to Belgrade in order to accommodate Moscow.

Attachments

Tab A Memorandum -- Kosovo: The Next Steps

Tab B Memorandum -- Some Thought about Slobodan Milosevic

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April 20, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: RICHARD HOLBROOKE

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NEXT STEPS

As the bombing ends its fourth week, allow me to offer some thoughts on the choices that lie before us:

PART ONE: His Choices, Our Choices

I. Sloba's Choices. While we control the bombing, Milosevic controls the timing and nature of the first political/diplomatic response. However, none of his options are attractive:

--First choice: he refuses to blink--and continues his current defiance of NATO;

--Second choice: he accepts our terms, in effect, surrendering--or else is replaced by a group who accept our position;

--Third choice: having emptied most of Kosovo of Albanians, Milosevic announces that he is ready to negotiate and makes a half-serious offer in an effort to split the Alliance and the Contact Group.

II. Our Choices--keyed to his three choices:

1. In the event that Belgrade continues to stand up to the air campaign: We have three courses, broadly speaking:

--end the bombing without achieving our objectives. Result: Milosevic wins.

--send ground troops to Yugoslavia in a "non-permissive environment"--that is, invade and occupy at least part of Yugoslavia. Result: Potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation of large portion of Yugoslavia.

--continue to bomb. This leaves the situation unresolved--in effect, taking us back to the starting point of this memo.

If the Administration wishes to avoid being pushed by events into either defeat or invasion, the bombing must intensify--and continue until the Serbs change their position, preferably by changing their leader.

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2. In the event that Belgrade accepts our terms or loses power, then we achieve our objectives. Result: We win.

3. In the event that Milosevic makes a semi-serious offer that still falls short of our core goals, we will face some complicated decisions which could strain relations with our Contact Group and NATO colleagues:

--Should we negotiate with Milosevic at all? Dayton may have been a deal with the devil, but it ended a war on acceptable terms. Milosevic kept enough of his word, especially regarding no NATO/American casualties in Bosnia, so as to justify continued dealings with him. But at the same time he was re-legitimized and re-empowered politically, and he then strengthened his economy with big international deals.

--But after Kosovo he is not the same person he was after Dayton. Whatever the details of an agreement, his sole goals will be to retain power, retain Kosovo, and avoid punishment for his own deeds. Can we allow that after Kosovo? Can Milosevic, the most disruptive person in Europe in half a century, become the co-guarantor of Kosovo's future?

--After the war is over, the world is going to demand justice. There will be widespread public opposition to any deal, no matter how good, that leaves Milosevic in power. This time, the War Crimes Tribunal will need to be satisfied. We will not be able to let indicted war criminals run loose, as is the case with Karadzic and Mladic. And I assume that Louise Arbour will indict Milosevic.

Our real goal: Regime change. Our real goal, whether stated or not, must be a change in the leadership of Yugoslavia. While there is no hard information that suggests such an outcome, we should not preclude it. I have an instinct that Milosevic is finished, but cannot foresee how or when¹.

--Nothing in wartime is more difficult than effecting a regime change. Even Churchill ignored several promising opportunities to help anti-Hitler plotters. Milosevic, however, runs a "soft dictatorship," more like Marcos than Saddam or Ceaucescu. The Serbs are not the North Vietnamese or the Iraqis; Milosevic is not popular and Serb unity, while it may exist at the moment, is not a long-term Serb thing. The men around him might look for ways to distance themselves from him; one way to do this would be to re-open lines of communication with Western officials. However, it would require the active support of the Army and some powerful business interests to remove him. There is also the danger

¹ See separate memorandum, "Has Milosevic Lost His Mind?"

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that he might be replaced, at least at the outset, by an even harder line ultra-nationalist, but that is a risk worth taking.

While Milosevic's departure from power is the optimum outcome, policy must be based on the likelihood that he cannot be dislodged, at least not in the time frame we seek, and it may therefore become necessary to negotiate with his regime once again. Thus the current Administration position of remaining vague on the issue in public is correct.

If negotiating with him or a regime he still controls is unavoidable, here are some important considerations:

A. Bombing must continue while the discussions take place. Milosevic is certain to try to link the opening of talks to the cessation of bombing². The Russians and perhaps some of our NATO allies will support him, but we must be unyielding.

B. Should the talks be with Milosevic, or with a subordinate? We do not wish to enhance his stature by sitting down with him again, but as long as he is in power only he can actually make a deal. Nonetheless, it would be preferable to deal with other people, if possible--including close subordinates who might look for ways to save themselves.

C. Where should talks be held? Milosevic will never leave Yugoslavia again, for fear that he will either be arrested by the War Crimes Tribunal or overthrown while he is away. So direct talks with him would have to be in Belgrade while NATO is bombing--not a good arrangement.

D. Who should conduct these talks? We are, as usual, constrained by Alliance and Contact Group politics. We cannot exclude our partners, yet we cannot conduct a serious negotiation if they participate on an equal basis. A conference can be formally co-chaired by the United States, Russia and a single EU representative, but real negotiations must be conducted in private--without the press watching every step--by the United States, which can keep the others informed. The planes are mostly ours; same with the negotiations.

--It seems likely Milosevic will offer to negotiate with someone other than the United States--the Russians, Kofi Annan, Carl Bildt, the Greeks, the Ukrainians, the Chinese, etc. If he succeeds in such a ploy, we would be allowing other parties to determine what the air war was for--that is,

² The exact position the North Vietnamese took in 1965-68, incidentally.

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what our war aims are. This strikes me as unthinkable.

E. Where? This time around, the United States is probably out. France, which had its shot and botched it badly, should not be given a second chance. Moscow will surely offer its lovely hotels and conference rooms, but that would be absurd. Geneva reeks of history's failures, and it is virtually impossible to keep the press and the international community out of the way. A remote place somewhere in Europe that can be sealed off and controlled would have to be found.

--Given these considerations, my recommendation is that any talks with the Yugoslav government be conducted not with Milosevic, but outside Yugoslavia with empowered subordinates, while we continue to look for ways to undermine him or encourage his removal.

PART TWO: War Aims

NATO has been criticized for lack of clarity or precision about the purposes of the bombing. But this is neither surprising nor troubling in the early stages of such a fluid situation. War aims often evolve as facts on the ground change. In this case, the original stated aims of the bombing had to change once the atrocities became apparent.

The current statements of our goals seems correct to me. We should continue to stress the three most urgent: the refugees go home; the Yugoslav security forces leave; and an international security force moves into Kosovo in a permissive environment. In turn, the KLA must agree to a cease-fire. (Disarming them, a key part of Rambouillet, will be a more difficult matter.)

Of course, Milosevic's proposals will fall far short of these goals. He will seek conditions that discourage refugee return; insist on leaving some of his security and border forces and offer to return to either the October or the Rambouillet levels; and oppose any international security force, then offer to allow one that has no NATO troops. All these ploys, and others too numerous to anticipate, should be rejected.

As for the political issues, which are more complex, we are unlikely to settle them in the first phase of negotiations, although we should try to make as much progress as possible. Rambouillet will no longer satisfy the KLA, which is now in substantial control of the Kosovar political situation. But most of the principles of Rambouillet are still valid, and should be part of the general framework agreement that accompanies the end of the bombing.

PART THREE: The Post-bombing Status of Kosovo and other Considerations.

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The post-bombing status of Kosovo might be a Trusteeship, under Chapter VII authority from the UN Security Council. This would not formally change the international status of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia, but it would remove it from the political control of Belgrade for a specified period of time. Partition of Kosovo strikes me as a bad idea, but I would not rule out completely the possibility of dividing Kosovo into different zones of temporary control, along the lines of the West Bank agreements.

Humanitarian Issues. The dimensions of this problem defy quantification at this early date, when we still do not know precisely what has happened inside Kosovo. But already we know that it will be far beyond anything Europe has seen since 1945:

--Housing and infrastructure have been destroyed. The rural population will not be able to re-establish itself before the planting season. Farm animals and wells have been destroyed. Winter is less than six months away. The costs will be staggering, higher than the highest current estimate. The international community will probably have to provide temporary housing for about one million people through the winter of 1999-2000, then provide security and a reconstruction program for years to come--an extraordinarily sad way, incidentally, to usher in the brave new millennium.

--Given this situation, we should consider immediately establishing a special high-level coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo, with authority to cut across interagency lines.

Regional Issues. The rest of the region will also need more attention, which will also be expensive. But the alternative is further instability and, ultimately, risks of further wars. Albania and Macedonia are, in different ways, close to the edge, and need immediate help far beyond what they are getting. The other near neighbors, plus Montenegro, have paid a huge price for the crisis, and also need assistance. And Bosnia must remain at the top of our agenda, since a setback there would raise questions about our entire policy.

Looking further down the road, there will also be a need to help with reconstruction within non-Kosovo Yugoslavia. It is clearly premature to think of helping the Serbs, yet in the long run building a viable, democratic Serbia is an essential goal for the European Union, Russia, and the United States.

Russia. The Russians seem to have realized that they should not let their own future be tied to the actions of a man who does not give a damn about them. The Secretary's successful Oslo talks, and the fact that the Russians have left their troops in Bosnia, are indications that Moscow is looking for ways to keep the strains within acceptable--and primarily rhetorical--limits, while dealing

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with its domestic opponents who are exploiting the issue.

While we need to work closely with Moscow, it is a dream to think they will bail us out. In fact, giving them a central role in a negotiation would probably backfire, because they would support compromises that would be unacceptable to us. Our public rejection of these proposals could then increase the strain between us. In short, we should keep in constant and close communication with Moscow, but not let them become deeply involved in a serious negotiation--for the sake of the U.S.-Russian relationship.

PART FOUR: Ground Troops.

We have been outmaneuvered by our critics on this issue, primarily because of three factors: first, the widespread theory that air campaigns alone never succeed; second, the general impatience of the public and the press; and third, the ability of Administration critics, especially Senator McCain, to hammer NATO for "not even having a plan."

The theory (almost universally held by the chattering classes and the Sunday pundits) that the air campaign has failed is not proven. While there are definitely limits to what air power alone can accomplish, it is too early to conclude that this campaign will not achieve its objectives, especially given the campaign's slow start. Comparisons are useful but can be misleading: in Vietnam most of the bombs fell in rural areas, and the economy was far less vulnerable to targeted bombing. In fact, there are already signs that the bombing is beginning to affect the thinking of business and leadership elements. Premature obituaries for the bombing will only drive the policy into a rush to a ground troop invasion--a step of historic import.

As for ground troops, our critics scored an easy point without having to support an invasion by hammering the lack of a plan. This has left the impression that we are opposed to rational and prudent planning. Yet a plan does not commit anyone; it is simply planning.

In fact, planning might highlight the costs and dangers of sending troops into Kosovo in a "non-permissive environment." Few advocates of sending ground troops into Kosovo have examined the potential costs and consequences of such a decision, which would be the most fateful any American President has taken since June-July 1965, when, after a week of intense secret debate, Lyndon Johnson told the American public that he would send 75,000 combat ground troops to Vietnam. Throughout the spring of 1965, Johnson had refused to discuss honestly with the Congress and the American public the situation, although the air war against North Vietnam had started in February. Before June, he literally tried to sneak military units into Vietnam under the fiction that they were not going into combat but merely protecting the air bases. All in all,

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it was probably the most devious act of any President in our time, with the most adverse consequences (including the beginning of an inflationary spiral at home.)

This is not, of course, an argument against the NATO-led peace-keeping force: one way or another, there will almost certainly be NATO ground troops in Kosovo later this year. And once there, they will stay a long time. But everything depends on whether they enter by invitation, along the lines of Dayton, with the formal agreement of the national authority in Belgrade--or whether they enter as an invasion force which will then become an occupation force. Talk about something in between a "permissive" and "non-permissive" force is wishful thinking; in the real world the troops are either invited in--which means low or no casualties--or they have to fight their way in. If they invade, they will not be able to stop in Kosovo; given the realities of the situation, they will have to pursue Serb forces deep into the rest of Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps as far as Belgrade itself. Under the permissive scenario, they should be able to restrict themselves to Kosovo (as well as Macedonia, Albania and perhaps Montenegro), and take low casualties as in Bosnia.

An invasion can, of course, succeed, but only at substantial cost. NATO is far too powerful, and the Serbs far too weak, to repel an invasion. If we undertake such a policy, we will surely prevail. But it could mean serious casualties, and at the end of the process NATO will "own" Yugoslavia, Albania, and Macedonia just as surely as the World War II victors owned Germany and Japan. They will have to occupy the land and defend themselves against possible attacks, including Somalia and Beirut-style terrorism. To be sure, even without an invasion NATO will be in the region for the indefinite future. But how they enter makes a huge difference. To put it somewhat melodramatically, will it be Dayton or D-Day?

PART FIVE: Summation

To summarize:

- Our most important goal should be to encourage a regime change.
- If that is not achieved before Milosevic makes a credible negotiating offer, then we should negotiate with someone other than him, in a site outside Yugoslavia.
- If Belgrade does not make a credible negotiating offer, we should intensify the bombing until it does.
- Bombing should continue during the negotiations.
- We should not compromise on our three core goals, but defer most political issues for a later date if necessary.
- We should make plans for a ground troop invasion of Kosovo, but recognize that it is a step from which there may be no exit.
- The planning effort should be made known to the public so as

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to allow its effect to be felt in Belgrade--and its costs and risks understood publicly.

--We should do more to deal with the worst humanitarian crisis Europe has seen since 1945, recognizing that it will get even worse once we gain access to Kosovo itself.

--We should start planning for trusteeship or protectorate status for Kosovo, and obtain full Contact Group endorsement for this general concept, without getting bogged down in the details.

To mention a few other important issues not covered in this memo:

--More economic pressure on Yugoslavia--as quickly as possible;

--More public information to reach the Serbs about what their troops are really doing in Kosovo: this is the area of greatest current urgency;

--Set up a separate operation for KLA handling; it is currently in danger of becoming an orphan of our policy, yet it will be critical.

--Finally, there is the question of justice. For some, especially the Kosovar Albanians, this will also be a search for revenge. We should not underestimate the anger that will exist after the war. Not only should we re-double our efforts on behalf of the War Crimes Tribunal now, but we must anticipate even greater demands for justice later. There will be fierce criticism of any negotiation with Milosevic, no matter what the deal. The world will demand justice for Milosevic after the war, if he is still alive.

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MEMORANDUM TO: The Secretary of State
The National Security Advisor

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

1. Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behavior is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions--admittedly of a highly speculative nature--about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behavior was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities.

At first he made real progress toward these goals. Most of the EU recognized Yugoslavia over our objections. The Italians and Greeks made a grotesque (but potentially profitable) deal with him for a large stake in the state telecom company, netting about \$1 billion in cash to him, money he could use to pay the army, bribe people, and perhaps move partly off-shore for his own uses and future protection. The United States and the Contact Group offered him a "road map" in which in return for full implementation of Dayton he would get the "outer wall" sanctions lifted or suspended on a rolling basis.

This policy was well underway when events in Kosovo derailed everything on both sides. His dreams for rejoining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member is now gone forever.

As this realization sinks in, as it must already have, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map--and he surely knows it. He ~~is~~ will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia.

With this bleak prospect facing him--one I suspect he is beginning to understand--his behavior has shown little of its

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previous cleverness or tactical flexibility. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox--short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends.

Perhaps for this reason--or because of some --Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the short run, but doom him in the long term. It is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible before he falls; no more creeping repression from Belgrade. Have deeply hostile psychological factors in his make-up taken over from his rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which was far detached from his anti-septic presidential surroundings. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behavior of this Milosevic is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result.

2. What About His Associates? They are not men of strength or courage. While they all owe their current positions to Milosevic, many of them have told Chris Hill, Wes Clark, and me over the years that they held views different from those of their leader. At times each tried to suggest to us that he held "softer," more reasonable views than Milosevic.

Nonetheless, they will want to save their own skins. Whatever their individual views on the sacredness of Serb soil in Kosovo, none are going to be ready to sacrifice themselves. I believe that the early signs of dissension within Serb ranks (and with Montenegro) are real, and probably reflect even greater unhappiness than we are aware of. This may be an exploitable opportunity, but must be handled with extreme care and confidentiality.

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Subject: Response to Thoughts from Nicholas Gage

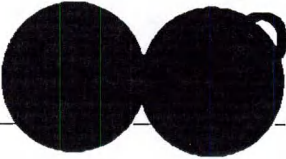
Sandy - cc: Jim, Don, Tom M.

I've read Nicholas Gage's proposal for a Balkan conference and wish to raise three concerns:

- First, Gage proposes that we get Milosevic to accept our basic conditions *on the understanding that the details will be negotiated at an international conference*. This presumably means that NATO would suspend the bombing and only then seek agreement on such issues as the pace and extent of Serb force withdrawals, the mandate and composition of the international military forces and Kosovo's future political status. This is an outcome that would appeal to Milosevic -- and be seen as a defeat for NATO -- since there would be no obligation for Belgrade to immediately withdraw forces or accept entry of a NATO-led force.
- Second, Gage proposes that we invite Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece to the conference, in addition to the Rambouillet participants, in the order to "create regional pressure on the Serbs." I'm worried that this would have the opposite effect. The leaders of Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia are all worried about Milosevic surviving as a source of future instability in the region. They are more likely to be intimidated by Milosevic than to serve as a source of pressure.
- Third, I assume that Milosevic or his representative would be invited to the conference. This would be seen -- inside and outside Serbia -- as the United States and its allies giving renewed international legitimacy to the Milosevic regime.

All of this said, there is an element of Gage's proposal that we are already pursuing, i.e. the G-8 principle of a "political process toward an interim political framework agreement ... taking full account of the Rambouillet accords...." This opens the door for a renegotiation of Rambouillet's political framework, but *not* our basic conditions.

In conclusion, I would recommend framing a future Balkan conference in the context of our Southeast European Initiative. In this case, participation by Serbia would be dependent upon their fully accepting -- and implementing -- our conditions.


JOHN A. CATSIMATIDIS

 TO: SCHULTE
 KERRICK
 MALINOWSKI

→ Jim | Greg | Don | Tom M -

How can this hurt us

- (except re: should Serbia participate issue). Why not put it out there in Thurs. speech?



SANDY -

 I STILL THINK
 THIS IS A GOOD
 IDEA, ESP. WHEN
 COUPLED W/ A
 COMMITMENT TO
 REBUILD THE
 BALKANS. WE SHOULD
 ACTIVELY EXPLORE IT.
 (E.G. DISCUSS W/ BRITISH)
 ASK CHERNO TO PUT
 TO MILOSEVIC.

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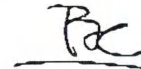
DOUG

 NICK GAGE ASKED ME TO FORWARD TO THE PRESIDENT, ^{September 1999}
 NICK HAS OFTEN ADVISED THE PRESIDENT IN THE PAST. ^{discuss w/ British}

REGARDS

JOHN

 to let them know the ~~president~~
 we should actively
 ask Chernob to put to
 Mike



 copied
 Berger
 Podesta

212 247-4509 To: DOUG SOSNICK at: WHITE HOUSE

NICHOLAS GAGE

April 19, 1999

President William J. Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Clinton:

As you know, I strongly supported you in both of your election campaigns and have publicly stated my admiration for the way you handled previous issues in the Southern Balkans. I'm writing to you now because I'm greatly concerned that our current policy in the region will have grave consequences for the whole area, damage American interests throughout Eastern and Southern Europe and threaten the impressive place in history that you have earned so far as President.

As you may remember, I have some experience with the Balkans. I was born on the Greek border with Albania, came to the U.S. as a refugee of the Greek civil war (and understand as well as anyone the pain of the Kosovo refugees), and went back as a correspondent for The New York Times to cover the region from 1977 to 1981. Back in 1993 I wrote an Op-Ed piece for The Washington Post entitled "Kosovo Powder Keg", which warned prophetically that American policy in the region "may actually encourage conflict in Kosovo rather than prevent it."

✓ You may recall too that in 1994 I was the first to warn about the fanatic nationalism of the then-president of Albania, Sali Berisha. Eventually you cut off U.S. support for him (to your great credit) and he fell from power. If that had not happened, Berisha, one of the founders and principal organizers of the KLA, would have had Albania attacking Yugoslavia and probably FYROM as well, and the wider Balkan war we all fear would be underway already.

Some of the planners of current U.S. policy on the Balkans who were strong supporters of Berisha have now gotten you, the United States and all of NATO into a war that will do terrible damage to American interests if it is not ended soon. Waves of anger against American policy in the Balkans are sweeping through Russia already and they could carry extreme nationalists to power in the next elections. There has never been such anti-Americanism in the Southern Balkans as there is now, as the daily demonstrations in Athens, Skopje and Sofia clearly show.

I recognize that, despite such risks, the credibility of our country and all of NATO is now at stake and we must prevail. But how we prevail is something else. I think that you, as a student of history, will appreciate that what you are offering the Serbs is akin to what Thucydides says the Athenians offered the Melians in the Peloponnesian War--total surrender or destruction. You are offering the options of complete capitulation or endless bombing (which is a far cry from the choice of slavery or death offered by the Athenians) but the point is that people may choose what is most destructive for them if pushed to extremes. That is why the Melians chose death to the last man and why you may have to bomb all of

Serbia into rubble to get its people to accept the terms you are now offering if they have no alternative they can accept.

But there is a way out of this conflict, Mr. President, in which the U.S. and NATO can prevail but also bring the war to a quick end.

Let Milosevic know that if he will accept your three basic conditions--a pullout of Serb troops from Kosovo, the return of refugees to their homes, and an international force to protect them--you will agree to hold a new conference on how to implement the terms, providing him the chance to soften some of the harshest elements arbitrarily imposed at Rambouillet.

To create regional pressure on the Serbs to accept the proposal, declare that the conference will include, in addition to the participants at Rambouillet, other countries in the Southern Balkans threatened by the conflict--Albania, Bulgaria, FYROM and Greece.

To make certain that the conference will succeed and to avoid the acrimony that built up at Rambouillet, appoint George Mitchell, who knows how to negotiate with implacable foes in an even-handed way, to head the talks.

This concept offers something for everyone. The U.S. and NATO prevail by having their terms accepted. The Serbs get a new chance to re-negotiate the more onerous aspects of the conditions at a conference that includes Balkan neighbors who understand the risks to the region, not just Americans and Western Europeans. Most of all, the people of Kosovo will get a chance to return to their homes under military protection and to administer their own province.

The other Balkan countries in the conference can pressure the Serbs not to be intransigent and at the same time make them feel less isolated than they were at Rambouillet. For their part, the Kosovars will get the added support of Albania and a real chance for their suffering to come to an end at last.

Without such an approach, all the other prospects are bleak: send in ground troops and take heavy casualties, continue pounding Serbia and killing civilians while watching Kosovo become a ghost province, or back down.

Backing down is out of the question, but are the other two options much better? They certainly aren't if there's a possibility of achieving a solution without sacrificing the three basic objectives.

There will be some who will condemn any effort to resolve the crisis short of complete capitulation on the part of the Serbs, but the many thousands of lives that are at stake as well as the danger of a prolonged war that could spread throughout the region make it essential to consider seriously any honorable chance for peace.

Sincerely,

