

From Dayton - to Peace

Muhamed Sacirbey

The agreement reached in Dayton in November 1995 and its basic outline were already assured by the successes of the Croatian and Bosnian militaries in August, 1995. The successful implementation of the NATO/military aspect of the Dayton Agreement during the first three months were already assured by the NATO air campaign against the Serbian forces in September, 1995. Unfortunately, while these successes did bring about an end to the war, they did not provide for the transition to, and durability, of the peace.

Much has been said lately about the successful implementation of the military aspect of the Dayton Agreement. With 60,000 troops on the ground, thousands of tanks and APC's, hundreds of aircraft to maintain the unchallenged control of the skies and, most critically, the fresh evidence of NATO's new willingness in the fall of 1995 to use that overwhelming force, should there ever have been any doubt as to success.

Much also has been said about the relatively slow progress of the so defined "civilian" aspect of the implementation. This slowness can be explained by several factors, the most critical of which are: First, many elements defined as part of the civilian implementation task more properly belong, in larger part, within the military task. In attempting to avoid "mission creep" at all costs, responsibilities are piled onto an improperly equipped and mandated civilian mission. As an example, this includes apprehension of war criminal suspects or providing security for freedom of movement or elections.

Second, already overburdened, the civilian implementation has been provided with inadequate resources. In addition, the financial pledges made for reconstruction are inadequate, and, even then, slowly, or not at all realized.

Third, the civilian implementation task is not only ill defined but there is almost a total lack of agreement as to what it is intended to ultimately achieve. This last factor is the most difficult to overcome. The organizations involved as well as the parties to the Agreement are too frequently working at cross-purposes. The Dayton Agreement has not only failed to produce a common vision but it has promulgated the survival of the ideology that is committed to the destruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a tolerant, democratic and multi-cultural society. Consequently, although Dayton is an attempt at peace through compromise, there is no reconciliation between the two ideologies at war. Instead, the institutions envisioned in the Dayton Agreement to cement peace are being stretched beyond any reasonable capacity to compensate for the perpetuation of the two irreconcilable ideologies that still persist in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

If this was an issue of Bosniaks versus Croats, the process of reconciliation would be difficult but at least conceptually manageable. Unfortunately though, this is a matter of an ideology of pluralism, democracy and openness confronted by an ideology committed to a

homogeneous, closed, undemocratic and intolerant society. These two ideologies cannot flourish nor even survive side by side within one society or even one governmental structure. By definition, a closed and intolerant philosophy is committed to destroying an open, pluralistic and democratic system. The Dayton Agreement has not in essence addressed this most basic inconsistency. It pays lip service to tolerance, democracy and pluralism, but, in fact, because of a fear to confront that still exists in Western capitals, the ideological challenge of ethnic purity and authoritarianism has not been answered. These Western capital may attempt to blame all Bosnians for this continuing failure, but it is their avoidance and design in Dayton that failed to confront this basic problem. Unfortunately, the Bosnians are then left with the ongoing structural problem of the Dayton Agreement and the blame for the symptoms of this problem that are evident to all. The Dayton Agreement and real peace will only prevail when the ideology of openness, democracy and pluralism is adequately supported over, and not equated to, the ideology of intolerance, authoritarianism and a closed system.

This same, general prognosis also applies to the region. While Dayton should have provided a new impetus for positive change within many states of the region, it seems to have been used as a mechanism to avoid progress and to revert to failed philosophies of the past. This unfortunate consequence is evident in more than one state, but it is nowhere more clear than in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). President Milošević has exploited the international community's approach to him, as a key to peace, to legitimize his rule. He has refashioned his government, even more since Dayton, to extinguish any flicker of opposition and an independent media and to bring back to life the most controlling aspects of Stalinist communism.

The final grade with the respect to the Dayton Agreement still is far off. Certainly, the results can be enhanced over the next few months. However, while the military aspect of implementation is a relative success, those elements necessary for durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region remain unresolved. Dayton has been approached by most Western capitals with the view to stop the war at the least cost with the least risk of conflict. So far they have received what they paid for - a rickety peace. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, in general, are still in need of something more credible. To alter this situation, there will have to be a greater and, most critically, sincere contribution from the outside and a firm commitment from our leadership and people in the region not to allow false ideologies and leaders to set the agenda. We must demand true democracy, openness, tolerance and economic accountability from the international and regional leadership if the true spirit of peace, compromise and Dayton are to prevail.