

TRANSCRIPT



CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: After putting together the Dayton Accords in November, Richard Holbrooke returned to the financial world of New York , but last week, the Clinton administration recruited Holbrooke for another mission, to gain somehow the removal of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic have been indicted for war crimes by the International Tribunal in the Hague and warrants are out for their arrests. But so far, the international force in Bosnia has not moved to capture either. The Dayton Accords stipulated that indicted war criminals could not seek office in the September elections, but up to last week, Karadzic was still acting like a candidate. And as long as he remained on the scene, most officials said the elections would be in jeopardy. Last week, Holbrooke launched a new round of talks to gain Karadzic's departure. That included more than 10 hours of negotiations with Serbian President Milosevic and warnings of new economic sanctions unless Karadzic was removed as leader of the Bosnian Serbs. By Friday, Holbrooke was able to announce that Karadzic would give up his political power as president of the Bosnian Serb Republic and as leader of the Serb Democratic Party. Karadzic also agreed not to appear in public or on broadcast media.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE, Bosnia Negotiator: I want to stress he knew what he was signing, knew he was signing the end of his political career.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: But some other Bosnians were still worried.

SPOKESMAN: Unfortunately we know that Karadzic will continue to act in informal way with the same degree of damage unless he's removed.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Last week's deal did not mention Gen. Mladic, or whether

either would face war crimes prosecution. I spoke with Richard Holbrooke earlier today.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Richard Holbrooke, thank you for joining us. You said in Belgrade that you had successfully secured Radovan Karadzic's removal from power. What exactly did that mean?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE, U.S. Envoy: We want Karadzic and Gen. Mladic, indicted war criminals, to be in the Hague and stand trial for war crimes. That is our goal, and that's what's called for under the Dayton Agreement. Getting there since we can't use NATO force to carry it out, getting there is a step by step process. Last week, we got Karadzic to sign a piece of paper pledging that he will leave political life immediately and permanently, and giving up both of his jobs, No. 1, president of the Serb part of Bosnia, and No. 2, president of the party the SDS, which he created and controls. So we made a big step forward. If Karadzic does not fulfill every detail of these agreements, we retain the leverage to come down hard on the entire Serb movement in Bosnia .

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: What does that mean, come down hard?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: We still have sanctions that could be reimposed. Amb. Froic in charge of the elections can still disenfranchise the SDS Party. These threats, which were part of the negotiating effort, were not threats we gave up because we didn't feel we achieved enough to give them up.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: And what would constitute a deal breaker? I mean, would this be a deal breaker?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Well, let me give you an example. Karadzic cannot appear in public. He can't give radio or TV or press interviews. If he violates these things, if they start running around with large posters of him like Big Brother behind Mrs. Plasic, who is now the acting temporary president of Serbska, behind her Big Brother posters of Karadzic, those are violations.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: What about--

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: And I can assure you that Secretary Christopher, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Kornblum, my successor in the European Bureau, they're all prepared to act very swiftly if there is a violation.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Well, you know, there was a time when after the Accords were signed and everybody had returned, that they were, he and Mladic were on the ski slopes and sort of thumbing their noses at the NATO forces. I mean, does it--does he have to remain invisible, or just not engage in political activity?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Invisible. And I'm glad you asked that. The word is invisible.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: And Mladic as well?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Mladic already is invisible. That ski slope incident back in March was practically an exception. He's appeared on a few other things but I am very concerned about Gen. Mladic, but on this trip I focused on Karadzic because Karadzic runs the political movement, and they were actively obstructing the political details of Dayton, including elections. Mladic, although he is a "hands-on" killer, is implementing the military parts of the agreement, and I put him in a different category temporarily--and I stress that word--from Karadzic. Let me say one other thing, Charlayne. For those people who say it was a half-measure, they're right. We only did a half-measure. But at the same time, I want to be clear that the history of negotiating in the Balkans is a long and winding road towards peace. And each time we make a step forward--and there's no question last week was a step forward--we pocket it, announce it, make sure it's implemented, and move on.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: But now you got this piece of paper signed by Karadzic. But you didn't deal with him face to face, right?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Right.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Is it--How did that work?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: We went--we had four hours of talks with Milosevic on Wednesday. I was very--

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: That's President Milosevic, the president of Serbia ?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: That's right. In Belgrade . I was very unhappy with these talks. I said I'm going to go to Zagreb and back to Sarajevo, I'll be back tomorrow afternoon, we're going to have to reach closure, or there are going to be very bad consequences. We returned on Thursday afternoon at 4 o'clock and he had moved the talks to a villa, and he produced the top two Bosnian Serbs from Pale after Karadzic, and that--at that point I knew we were in for a long night. We negotiated for 10 hours, and we negotiated a piece of paper. He then dispatched his security chief, Mr. Stanasic, to Pale, and Stanasic personally witnessed Karadzic and Mrs. Plasic signing the document which we had faxed to Pale. There were no changes in it in Pale, and we wouldn't have tolerated any. Stanasic then brought back the original, and I waited for him in Belgrade . And at about 2 in the morning, he gave me the original, and we had a long talk about the circumstances under which Karadzic ended his public and political career.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: But you spent all this time with Milosevic and Milosevic also was in Dayton . He's been the pivotal figure negotiating with the United States and with the Bosnian Serbs, Mladic, Karadzic. He knew what the terms were. Why did you have to go and renegotiate them again? He signed onto this accord.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Well, you know, the Dayton Agreement said he should comply with and cooperate with the War Crimes Tribunal, which he's not been doing. But the Dayton Accords did not say that Karadzic had to give up his power in the SDS specifically. That is what we came to the conclusion was absolutely necessary, given the way Karadzic was behaving.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Oh, so this was a second thought? This was an after thought?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Charlayne, this is Dayton and Dayton plus, uh, but it's very important that that be understood as we move forward because we've got plans for the next week or two.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: You mean, follow-up--excuse me--the follow-ups to what you achieved. You mean you're going to have to freelance the accord now, is that what you're saying?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Not me, but I do want to make clear what our--what the plans are for my colleagues. I did this as a one-time effort at the request of the secretary of state and the White House and Amb. Kornblum. The next step which we are announcing today is that Amb. Kornblum, the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, will leave for Belgrade this weekend, after stopping in Europe to talk to the Europeans. And he will see President Milosevic again, and he will pursue the next step in this process.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Which is--

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: The next step in the process is that Karadzic should leave Pale, the mountain stronghold which he really created. As long as he's in Pale, even if he's invisible, even if he's out of public and political life, I personally feel uncomfortable, and so do my colleagues. So Amb. Kornblum is going to go after that as the step, and then the next steps after that--

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Excuse me. Leave Pale and go where, to the Hague , to the War Crimes Tribunal?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: I'm going to let Amb. Kornblum work that out.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Is that the goal?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: The long-term goal is unambiguous--Karadzic and Gen. Mladic to the War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague . But the details of confidential diplomatic negotiations by

necessity must remain confidential, and I'm not going to foreclose or foreshadow John Kornblum's negotiating tactics. I just want to be clear, since it has not been announced prior to this interview, that Amb. Kornblum is going to follow up immediately and vigorously picking up from where I left off.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Now what do you mean vigorously?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Uh, vigorously means vigorously. The leverage that we have is still in place.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: You mean the sanctions?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Sanctions, the threat is available. The question of disbaring or disenfranchising the SDS is still available, and NATO is a very important factor in this. It's no accident that I began my shuttle last week by going to Brussels to see General Joulwan, the Supreme Commander, and Selana, the Secretary General. They're support for my mission was absolutely critical. So Kornblum is going to pursue a very vigorous, aggressive strategy next week.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Is that because you're afraid that without the muscle of the United States , these agreements will be--they'll go back on these agreements--

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Yes.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: --even with Milosevic's assurance that it would go forward, and even with this signed deal?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Charlayne, I think the history of the last year has been very clear on this. We need to work in partnership with our European allies, but it is American leadership vigorously exercised that is what brings achievement. This is not a criticism of our European

friends and colleagues. But it has to be American leadership.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Presidential Candidate Bob Dole criticized the deal that you struck this weekend, saying that you allowed this indicted war criminal to remain there, effectively leaves him in control of Bosnia , and is it not the case that many of his--most of his deputies and top aides are all nationalists who do not want a multiethnic Bosnia .

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Well, the second part of your question is undeniable. Krjsnic, Buha, Plasic, the people behind Karadzic, are as tough as he is. They haven't been indicted, and under the rules of Dayton and the mutual agreement that the Bosnians agreed to, they can participate in the elections. In fact, President Izetbegovic told me he was ready to, to try to work within the framework with these people if they haven't been indicted, even though he hates them. As for Sen. Dole's charge, I think he's a bit premature. We got half of what we wanted. Dole is correct when he says that Karadzic is still in Pale. That's why Amb. Kornblum is going out to Belgrade , but I think it doesn't help if Sen. Dole criticizes the agreement and predicts its failure at the very moment it's taken place. What I would hope Sen. Dole would do is join the administration in saying to Karadzic, Mladic, and company that full implementation of this and further steps are necessary, otherwise, there will be consequences.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Briefly, what odds do you give the September 14th elections coming off as scheduled under--with all of these things up in the air sort of?

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: The chances of the election taking place, very high 90's, 98 percent. The question, however, not to ask your questions for you, Charlayne, the question isn't whether they're going to take place. They will take place. The question is: Will they be a success or not?

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Free and fair.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Free and fair. And that, the jury is out on that and will remain out on it until September 15th at the earliest.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: All right.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: And you and your colleagues in the press will really have the determining vote on that because you will be the world's eyes and ears into this, that plus observer missions. I'm not going to predict how these elections are coming out. I've spent a lot of time with Krjsnic and Brouha and Milosevic in Belgrade talking about this issue and saying, look, Karadzic is gone now. They said, yes, he is, we promise he is. And then I said, but now the elections have to work, or else there will be consequences. Again, Kornblum's trip is going to pursue that very heavily.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER GAULT: All right.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: May I make one other point?

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Briefly.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Vice President Ganic of Bosnia is going to Belgrade tomorrow. This was another part of our trip. It's very important. It is the highest level trip between Sarajevo and Belgrade since the war began.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: He's a Bosnian.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: The Bosnian vice president. He's going to see Milosevic. He's taking a trade mission with him. The American Ambassador, John Menses, is going with him to make sure it works. It is a big deal trip, and in the Balkans, it was very big news last week when we announced it and arranged it.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: All right. Well, Mr. Holbrooke, thank you for joining us.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Thanks, Charlayne.