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Dayton History Project

INTERVIEW

FINAL

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STROBE TALBOTT

Deputy Secretary of State

July 30, 1996

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Tape Transcripts

SEEN AND APPROVED BY DEP. SEC. TALBOTT, 12/10/96

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Transcribed by Gloria Beasley
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Strobe Talbott Interview
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CHRIS HOH (CH): ...and we'll also end up doing a transcript of this which, once it's done, we'll send up to you so you can take a look at it and make sure it's okay. While you played a crucial role in many stages of the process of getting this peace initiative organized in the summer since the crisis developed -- and it's important that we cover that -- we want to discuss your role at the end of August when the NATO bombing campaign started and you were Acting Secretary as well as main telephone caller in the SitRoom, according to some people who were there. Also, we want to discuss the issue of Russia and its participation in IFOR, which is a tricky area. To us, those seem to be the major areas we should discuss with you. But I wanted to ask at the outset if there's any additional topic that we need to make sure we pick your brain on.

STROBE TALBOTT (ST): Something may draw loose as we proceed. But those do sound, indeed, like the areas in which I was most involved. Shortly after I became Deputy Secretary, the Secretary asked me to work on Bosnia policies. That was in February, March, or April. What are the ground rules, the embargo arrangements, the degree of candor that you're hoping for in these interviews? I mean, I assume there's no holds barred.

CH: Here there's no holds barred.

ST: This is entirely a USG project. So I don't have to worry about other countries' sensitivities?

CH: That's right. And we've had all kinds of colorful comments from our allies.

ST: I bet you have.

CH: The idea is, in the second phase of this project, we will do a classified study and so there'll have to be some work done to figure out what to include in that study because that will be an official document, even though it will remain classified. And then from that, State will do excerpts so there is eventually some kind of publication describing how the US got to the Dayton Peace Talks.

ST: Yes, and those of us involved presumably will have some say on how much gets declassified. Right?

CH: Yes, the normal declassification rules apply.

ST: I'm not going to worry about that. Obviously the right people are thinking about how to do this. I'll do the best I can.

CH: Okay. I wanted to start talking about the summer of 1995 period. (We have a July calendar directly behind you.) I'm sure you recall the developing sense -- even well before July, when UNPROFOR peacekeepers were taken hostage -- that UNPROFOR was coming to the end of its rope. And then, with the fall of Srebrenica, the sense that we really were facing very quickly the possibility of an UNPROFOR withdrawal as well as a disastrous humanitarian situation. And on July 17th there was this end-game strategy that was presented to the principals, which was largely based on an NSC draft and eventually was worked out and improved with the President's participation. What was your sense of the crisis that had developed in July?

ST: When was London?

CH: London was on July 21st, and that's where we got the agreement of the NATO allies to use air power in a significant way to protect Gorazde.

ST: And taking the UN key away.

CH: Yes, getting the UN key which, I think, was also on the 26th. Essentially, the key was delegated to Janvier, so there was a UN key but it was one that would no longer be controlled by a group of civilians in New York but rather by a military commander in the field.

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ST: This is the worst trick that time plays; I've had this experience both with my own recollections and other people in this regard -- and I've done a lot of journalism without some of the advantages that you have here -- but it is very, very difficult to keep straight the calendar. But London was a turning point. Srebrenica was obviously another turning point in the sense of not just crisis. Crisis almost understates the problem. It was impacted frustration and impotence that was the emotional setting that led us finally to break out of that mold. Breaking out of that meant two things. It meant getting rid of the UN key and simplifying and resolving that the United States would resort to significant and decisive use of force. Srebrenica was the crystallization of the problem, and London was the crystallization of the solution. That's how it felt at the time. I assume you have chapter and verse from other people on how much debate there was about London, that is, fears of setting ourselves up for a fall and other misgivings that people had about it.

CH: Yes. One of the interesting things is we had a consensus here that we would encourage NATO to use air power in a decisive way if there were certain things happening in the field -- the mortar attack on the Sarajevo marketplace then triggered that later on in August but we didn't necessarily have the rest of NATO on board going to London in particular. But even after London, there was some, it seems to me, very circumscribed view of what those actions meant. Do you have any recollection of trying to bring the rest of our partners along on this?

ST: I certainly have a recollection of the issue and I think what you probably need from me is information on any direct contact. Has our office provided you with any documentation that we've got?

CH: Quite a bit in fact. It's been very helpful.

ST: Was Robin Remick involved? I believe he was, wasn't he?

CH: I believe so, yes.

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ST: I remember any number of conversations with him and Wolfgang Ischinger. I think the German ambassador at the time, Amb. Chroborg, had not arrived yet.

CH: I'm not sure when he arrived.

ST: That was important because the previous German ambassador was really very little use to us. So he did not have a good term here in Washington, which meant that we would find other excuses to call or see Ischinger, who, of course, ended up being extremely helpful. And the argument with the Brits, of course, always was, "You know, we have men on the ground and you don't. Who are you to be telling us?" That was the flavor of our discussions. I didn't have much to do with the French. Peter Tarnoff did.

CH: Okay.

ST: But it increasingly became apparent that we weren't going to lead unless we could get them to follow.

CH: This is the chronology that we put together which can help in terms of keeping dates straight. If you want to refer to that, there's a copy of the general calendar which, at least, is colorful. In August, then, there was an end-game strategy and these are actual notes that came out of SP. But the basic working document done by the NSC staff with a note saying, "Perry, Shali don't like," this is what was finally approved at the principals' committee meeting on August 7th. Is that right?

DEREK CHOLLET (DC): Yes.

CH: And it said a variety of things: one, we're going to lead. Madeleine Albright had been pushing very much saying there's a question of US leadership here. It also said we were willing to pressure the Bosnians as well as our allies. And the sense of this is, if the parties aren't willing to negotiate seriously for the peace, we'll have sticks as well as carrots in cooking up this proposal. That, then, convinced the allies who were actually, I think, to hear others tell it, quite glad to see the US was taking this kind of initiative, and also that we might push the Bosnians toward serious negotiations which

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meanit we had taken over the lead there. What do you recall of this debate in the Administration, the idea that we were going to commit our prestige in some kind of peace initiative?

ST: I think the handwritten scribble at the top of this paper captures what I remember. I was working on Haiti; DOD was most persuading, and saw very, very vividly the risks associated with any strategy involving American forces. There was more or less the same cast of characters in both cases here arguing in favor of diplomacy backed by force. I can't do much better than that unless you target the question more precisely to refresh my memory.

CH: Okay.

ST: But it was a day-in, day-out thing. There was a multi-pronged struggle going on with the deteriorating situation on the ground which fed mounting Serb arrogance and aggressiveness. When was the Croatian offensive?

SE: It began on the 4th.

CH: August 4th to August 7th, basically.

ST: Yes. I was in Europe on vacation. That obviously changed profoundly, not just the correlation of forces, but also the perception of the unspoken assumption of Serb dominance; it was the Serb juggernaut and it triggered some sentiment. But another front in the struggle was the dialectic between the State Department and the Pentagon whether to use all necessary Americans in order to get the allies to agree to use force. And then there was the diplomatic side. You mentioned the Russians. I don't actually remember the Russians being that huge a problem at that time. All they cared about, it seems to me, was, first of all, not bombing just the Serbs. They had long since made a strategic choice, I think, between Belgrade and Pale or Banja Luka, which is to say, they were going to go all-out to defend Serbia proper and they were going to make the most out of the schism that was already growing between Milosevic and the Pale Serbs. So since we were going to be going after Mladic and Karadzic, who were

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Bosnian Serbs, and not after Belgrade with military force, the Russians were not a problem. Kozyrev, as foreign minister, was simply not that potent.

CH: In late August, when the bombing actually started, the Serbs -- on the 28th -- sent a mortar into the Sarajevo market. Within about twenty-four hours, the UN concluded that the shell came from the Serb side and the NATO air campaign started the next day. Actually, ironically, Holbrooke's team was going into Belgrade.

ST: I remember very well.

CH: What do you remember of that? You were Acting Secretary for part of that time.

ST: I remember several conversations with Holbrooke himself -- not arguing because there was nobody arguing against him -- with us agreeing that his mission would be more successful if we were using force demonstrating resolve simultaneously. The response to the Sarajevo market massacre had to be immediate; it had to be serious; it had to be open-ended, at least in terms of our willingness to turn it back on. *(chuckle)* There was some expectation, I remember, that because Holbrooke was out there in the region, he would argue for military restraint. In fact, he argued for just the opposite.

CH: Not long after that -- I think it was September 9th -- there was a vote in the Duma, a non-binding resolution saying that Russia would suspend cooperation with NATO, lift the embargo -- the arms and economic embargo that been applied to Serbia -- and generally reacted negatively to the bombing campaign. Were you concerned that somehow this could prompt the Russians to act more assertively on behalf of the Serb side?

ST: Here my memory of what I worried about at the time may be skewed by what happened subsequently. I'll give you my most honest answer: no. My calculation, I think, was, first of all, the Duma and the Russian executive branch were following quite different lines. Second, Russia was a bit of a paper tiger with regard to the Balkans. They had too many preoccupations and problems at the time and they weren't going to get themselves into some kind of proxy war against the West.

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Russia didn't have the resources to do that. Third, Belgrade, which is much more important to Russia than Srpska, didn't take the Russians very seriously. Milosevic wasn't looking to Russia as his protector then or at any point, so it's not as though Russia had a willing and eager client of some kind. The Russian factor obviously required managing, but I don't recall that looming larger in our worries or our calculations on how to deal with the situation. Tell me if you have either evidence to the contrary or other people's memories taking you in a different direction.

CH: There are not. There aren't many people who've really been able to speak authoritatively about the Russian angle.

PHIL GOLDBERG (PG): No. That's exactly my recollection at the time and now, that there was always more bark than bite.

ST: Some critics on the outside -- notably including my very dear old friend Mike Mandelbaum (SP?), who's been one of our sharpest critics -- had worried for a long time that one reason we shouldn't get involved in Bosnia was that it would jeopardize the strategically much more important gain -- the one with the Russians. They said that there was an apparent contradiction between a proactive, vigorous, forceful American strategy in Bosnia and, in effect, the Russian policy. That sooner or later the old ties between Moscow and Belgrade would prove stronger than those ties emerging between Moscow and the West, Moscow and Washington. That turned out to be simply not true. I remember hearing this warning or caveat as we went along and testing it against what we actually were experiencing with the Russians and being pretty convinced that we were going to be all right with them. To put it differently, what would really have jeopardized what we were trying to do with the Russians would have been a total and complete disintegration of the situation in Bosnia. All-out, spreading war with the nightmare that we all conjured up: the third Balkan War of the century bringing in the Albanians, the Macedonians, the Turks, the Greeks, and God knows who else. That would really get us into the soup with the Russians. And

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that's an argument we ultimately made with the Russians. In fact, it's an argument we make with the Russians to this day when they warn us against this, that, or the other thing. We say, "Look at the greater danger if we don't work together."

CH: That is helpful. Apparently, there were also some contacts directly between President Clinton and President Yeltsin when the bombing campaign was underway on, I think, September 7th.

DC: There's an exchange of letters.

ST: And you can't find them, I'm sure.

DC: Yes. We only have the Clinton response. We don't know where to find the original Yeltsin letter.

ST: Well, that's just got to be an archival problem over there.

DC: A system glitch, yes.

ST: Yes. I remember the letters. There are two categories of Yeltsin letters which were studied very closely at the time. There are "real" Yeltsin letters and "produced-by-the-system" Yeltsin letters. Now, these were almost all in the latter category. You can certainly imagine, this is not an issue on which Boris Yeltsin dictated the words that were then sent to Clinton because Yeltsin had bigger, much bigger things on his mind. So these came from the foreign ministry; they're from bureaucrats.

CH: Well, that's good to know. One of the things that engaged the system, in the bombing campaign, was that suddenly there was a pause. Janvier had decided to give the Serbs time to pull their weapons out and then we had to call a technical pause. This is a document sent to you from Walt Slocombe saying, "We'll have this technical pause to give them a certain amount of time." But we've heard repeatedly, including from Wes Clark and Dick Holbrooke who were, of course, on the road at the time, that we hadn't been expecting this bombing pause.

ST: Absolutely. It drove us nuts. I remember going over to the tank for a briefing once the bombing had begun and then, literally, during the course of the briefing, a note was

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brought in to one of the brass with the word that Janvier had declared this pause. That caught us completely by surprise. Janvier was a loose cannon that was sometimes firing in one direction and sometimes firing in the other. There was worry about not being able to turn him off when he was on and not being able to turn him back on when he was off.

CH: They were both problems in this particular case.

ST: Yes. There was also an acute sense that we didn't have any control over him. But it was our guns that he was shooting and then not shooting. He seemed always to get it wrong.

CH: Well, you had to explain some of this to Mo Sacirbey who called you (this is a write-up of that call on September 1st) complaining that the bombing pause, which had started that day -- again, just as Holbrooke and his team were going to Belgrade -- had come suddenly. He wanted you to keep going; you had to defend this pause that, as you said, had taken people here by surprise.

ST: It drove us nuts.

CH: You had a lot of talks with Sacirbey.

ST: Mm-hmm.

CH: Does anything about this one stand out in your memory?

ST: Sacirbey asked for permission to quote Talbott on this plan. I remember that nobody worked the media, particularly CNN, better than Sacirbey, with the possible exception of Silajdzic. Sacirbey was going right out from his office to a CNN interview. That's when he asked if he could quote me. *(reads document)* Well, we did get it turned back. This is now getting all blurred. Are we into Labor Day yet?

SE: Yes.

CH: Yes. This is the Saturday of Labor Day weekend.

ST: I remember this call. I think it took place while I was in my office, but a lot of that weekend I spent over in the Sit Room.

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SE: Yes. That's right.

ST: And at one point, the Bosnian Serbs started actually using CNN quite effectively. They took Peter Arnett up to some mountainside where he had no idea where he was. They showed him APCs moving down the road and said, "Those are being withdrawn." Does this ring a bell with you? Remember that?

CH: Yes. There was all this talk that they had withdrawn.

ST: And we said, "We're not sure where Arnett is, or in which direction those APCs are moving; we don't know what it means." Yet that put us under a lot of pressure, of course. Was that this pause or another pause? (*points to calendar*)

SE: That was this pause.

ST: Yes. And we had the Mladic letters?

DC: Yes.

SE: That's right.

ST: You didn't ask the question, but let me mention two absolutely key people whose names should be recorded with glory: Willy Claes and Kofi Annan. There were many times during that series of days when we felt very blessed that Klaus was in the NATO SG chair and that Boutros-Ghali was either in the hospital or in China, wherever he was -- better yet in the hospital than China. Was he sick or traveling, do you know?

CH: Not sure.

ST: But, anyway, Kofi was great.

SE: Oh, he was in Europe, I think.

ST: I think he may have been sick. Anyway, Kofi was the Acting SG and was fantastic. Just when we needed him.

CH: To jump back to Claes for a second, the President, apparently, called Claes on the 2nd saying, "Mladic isn't willing to cooperate; we'll have to resume the air strikes." Was your sense that that was more kind of a walking in where we had gotten Claes to be or did the situation require that kind of approach?

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ST: Claes was consistently the best of the Europeans. Now, the French, of course...I'm sure you'll do a lot on the French, and Chirac, and what was called the rapid reaction force, and all that. That was all very important, and may, by the way, have important reverberations in the next several months depending on what the French are willing to do. But Claes was always the most consistent, predictable, available, clear in his answers, and scrupulous in his scholarship.

CH: Well, shortly after these calls with Claes, then, you talked again to Sacirbey. This is now on Saturday the 2nd, so it was part of the marathon phone-calling out of the Sit Room. You tried to explain that we were pursuing this; that we had a real ultimatum, and that we expected the Serbs to stick to it. Where was your sense of where the Bosnians were on this?

ST: Where the **Bosnians** were?

CH: Yes.

ST: In what sense?

CH: They were unhappy with the bombing pause and you're saying to them, "Look, this is only going to be a short pause and if the Serbs don't comply, we're going to resume the bombing."

ST: When did we resume it?

SE: On the 5th.

ST: So how many days were we down?

CH: Three days. But the deadline had been the 4th.

ST: We kept fooling around with the deadline. The only way I can answer your question is to remember that the Bosnians were berserk the whole time. They were berserk, by the way, even when we were bombing, and particularly so when we weren't. We kept trying to come up with rationalizations for the thing continuing longer than we wanted to see it continue. There was a NAC?

SE: Yes. That's right.

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CH: Through the night, I think, on the 2nd.

ST: We screwed around with the language and we couldn't find Joulwan. Joulwan was on vacation in Norfolk or Virginia Beach or someplace like that. We physically could not reach him for a long stretch of time.

CH: You were trying to get him to call Snuffy Smith?

ST: Yes, it must have been, because we didn't need him for Claes. No problem with Claes. I remember talking to Rifkind in his family home in Scotland and he was okay. Do you have any record of that?

DC: We may.

ST: We had no luck with the French. They were totally, "I don't care."

DC: A lot of those were in the Sit Room.

ST: Yes. Rifkind was definitely in the Sit Room.

DC: Whatever you patched to the Op Center, we can get a record of. Other than that, no.

ST: Yes. The Sit Room doesn't have records of that?

DC: They'll do something like the Op Center does with logs. But we haven't been able to get their logs.

ST: On the French, I was dealing with...it wasn't de Charrette, was it? It was still Juppe, right? Wasn't Juppe the minister?

CH: I think it was de Charrette at that point.

ST: Okay, in any event, I didn't talk to him. I talked to whoever his chief of staff was, sort of the equivalent of the executive secretary of the Department because they were still on their August vacation.

CH: Yes, they always accuse us of coming up with surprises in August.

ST: Was the President out West?

DC: He was in Wyoming.

ST: Wyoming, that's right.

DC: Peter was in a golf cart and gave him a briefing when the bombing started.

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ST: Peter Bass. Uh-huh. Okay. I'm afraid I've gone mushy on you here.

GH: Well, that's okay. We can put these details in the chronology.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE B, TAPE 1

ST: Yes. Did it really matter to the Bosnians that the bombs were paused? And once Janvier turned it off, we were quite nervous about being able to turn it back on. And then we did. Bob Hunter was very helpful. There was a marathon NAC meeting going until 2 o'clock in the morning and Hunter came out several times on some issue of the language that had to do with conditionality for re-suspension, I think.

CH: There was that and there was also the question of escalating the level of targets, where you had to go back to the NAC.

ST: That's right.

CH: To go to what?

ST: There were three categories? Yes. That's right.

CH: Category three involved two constitutions, so it meant you would be directly targeting people to kill them and people felt we should go back to the NAC, and we were coming out of this experience with not being able to get the bombing restarted.

ST: Incidentally, on CNN and the Peter Arnett thing where there was a sort of war of resources going on, I think that I called Tom Johnson somewhere along the line. I know I called him on one or two other occasions.

CH: Of CNN?

ST: Yes, the head of CNN, to basically say, "Look, you institutionally have become a player and you're being used. You are being used by both sides. And all we ask is that you let us give you our side of the story that we hope you then will take into account

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when you're making news judgment about how to use some of these interviews you're getting; the standups; the photo ops, and so forth and so on." And he followed up immediately and put Steve Hurst in touch with me and Nick Burns so that we could give our own corrected briefings on stories that they were getting out of Sarajevo.

CH: And that was obviously important. What do you think the impact of having CNN cover the story better was? Is that also getting some message back to the Serbs?

ST: Yes, I hope it was getting some message back to the Serbs, but more importantly, it was making sure that the CNN factor in decision-making here and in Brussels and other Western capitals was more accurate. CNN was a hugely important factor throughout all of this. The pictures of the carnage in Srebrenica had a lot to do with mobilizing the operation necessary to translate it into action, but then the Peter Arnett thing, in particular, served to drive us and the alliance towards an open-ended suspension.

CH: So you managed to get him that Labor Day weekend to work that out?

ST: I don't know what day it was, to be honest. It may not have been until the Monday afterwards or Tuesday evening or so. You talk to Nick Burns, he may have some better idea of the date.

CH: What about Kofi Annan whom you mentioned a minute ago as being superb?

ST: Well, I just remember talking to him during that period because we needed both the acquiescence and the affirmative support of the UN and specifically of the Secretary-General. Boutros-Ghali was playing games with us in talks with the Russians. But all kinds of issues that would have been at least delayed, if not obstructed, Kofi just did it, on the spot.

CH: He didn't throw anything back in your face saying, "Now, this is the very key you guys tried to take away from me and now you want me to exercise it?"

ST: No, he understood.

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- CH: That's good. Let's jump ahead a little later in the game in October when you were working with the military to develop IFOR plans and working with the Russians, figuring out how it made sense for them to participate. When did we first begin to envision some kind of Russian role in this NATO-led force? What was the early thinking of how that might develop?
- ST: Well, we're running out of time, of course (and I should have started by apologizing for having to jerk you around on timing, but we are going to do this again in September. I think it would be a good idea if you could provide Bill before we meet the next time any specific questions you have so I can go through my date book and my brain and come a little better prepared the next time). To answer your question, those of us who had been worried had been thinking about NATO enlargement and Russia's integration from the beginning. In my case, that meant from even in '93, but certainly into '94. And by the time IFOR became a glint in our eye, which was way before we gave it a name, several of us were looking for a way to *jujitsu* what had been a big problem, and turn it into a solution. The big problem was that NATO's activism in Bosnia would exacerbate Russian anxieties about NATO power. And the way to *jujitsu* it was to make NATO's activism in Bosnia a proof of the proposition that NATO and Russia could cooperate and that we could turn the Bosnian experience into a reassurance as opposed to an aggravation as far as the Russians were concerned. So, conceptually, that was there from very early on. I had a couple of conversations with Bill Perry. I think Bill Perry was already thinking about developing more of a working relationship with Grachev. And I also discussed it on a couple of occasions with Kozyrev.
- CH: One of these Perry-Grachev conversations took place on the 8th of October. This is a note of those discussions.
- ST: Where?
- CH: In Moscow, I believe.

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SE: Yes, that's right. In Moscow.

ST: Yes, I do remember those!

CH: You were along for that trip.

ST: I also went to Geneva. There was a Geneva meeting? There were three meetings I remember: Washington, Moscow, and Geneva.

SE: That was Moscow. That's Geneva, right there. That's a mistake.

ST: I remember a Sunday meeting.

SE: Yes. That's a mistake.

DC: This is Moscow and Holbrooke was there.

ST: But was Perry there?

DC: I don't think Perry was there. I think you went with Slocombe.

ST: Maybe that's right.

SE: Yes, that's right.

ST: Yes, and we went to see Grachev. Now, when was the Washington meeting?

CH: Did Grachev lead the Russian delegation for that meeting?

ST: Yes.

DC: That was probably when Grachev and Perry went out to blow up the...out in Kansas?

ST: That sounds right.

DC: It was...

ST: When _____ was with them? We met them at the Pentagon.

DC: We'll have to get that.

ST: Okay?

CH: At the Geneva meeting, then, on the 8th, there were some very sticky details. How you have Russians work under NATO command but call it something else, this *jujitsu*.

ST: Well, the *jujitsu*ing was about something else. The Russians had a hang-up: they were unbelievably, surprisingly, sanguine about being under American command. It was being under NATO command -- NATO being a four-letter word in Russia -- that

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bothered them. So that's why we kept playing with passing wiring diagrams back and forth across the table. And you know what we came up with, which basically was under American command.

CH: And the American command doesn't worry about what happens beyond that.

ST: I am sure there are much more detailed readouts of these meetings than this. I've seen them.

CH: Okay. But this is something that, I believe, is your own write-up or may, in any case, reflect more of the specific arguments you made to the Russians that what we're talking about here goes well beyond Bosnia.

ST: Yes. Well, that was it throughout. That this is a way of dealing with Bosnia, but it's also a way of putting in place the fundamental structure of a cooperative NATO-Russian relationship.

CH: In that context, you actually were leading up to a summit between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin on the 23rd up at Hyde Park.

ST: Right.

CH: In New York, where this was also on the agenda but in the sense that this would then bless the previously made arrangements.

ST: Right.

CH: What do you remember about the lead-off into that and the sense to which we thought we had this worked out?

ST: Well, as it turned out, we did have it worked out, although we had been through an experience the previous year in Budapest in which we thought we had everything wired to the Russians then it blew up in our face. So we were ready. And in this case, we had a little bit of suspense because Yeltsin came to the United Nations with a speech to the General Assembly which was exceedingly grumpy on this subject, which was full of a lot of bombasts that suggested that he was against NATO enlargement and that the Russians weren't going to play second-fiddle to the Bosnians, and so forth

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and so on. And then, basically, Yeltsin went to Hyde Park and either caved or got reasonable on all of these questions. We got exactly what we had wanted.

CH: Which was to send 2,000 Russians soldiers and put them under American command.

ST: Yes. This was why we were playing with variations of the instruction brigade as opposed to...you got it all here...the third option, too. Yeltsin wasn't in the greatest shape at that meeting, by the way, the extent to which booze was a factor we'll never entirely know. My own feeling was that people exaggerated that greatly. Has that come up in other interviews?

CH: Not really, because I don't think we've had people who were at those meetings.

ST: Well, part of the problem there is that I think Yeltsin was quite sober during the important working session, that was a one-on-one with me as the notetaker, so I saw all of that, heard all of that. But then there was a lunch and Yeltsin got reasonably s---faced and there were a lot of other people around who subsequently commented on it and that's contributed to the impression that the booze was a bigger factor than in fact it was during the real important negotiations.

CH: Well, reasonably s----faced is better than unreasonably s----faced. *(laughter)*

ST: Well, absolutely. We've seen him that way, and will again, I suspect.

CH: Well, was that a major issue on the agenda for these two presidents or did it turn out...?

ST: Which?

CH: The Russian participation in IFOR.

ST: It was **THE** issue. The only other issue of any consequence was CFE. Yeltsin produced a map which was just basically their position and he did it at the very end. Oh, no, it was NATO-Russia-Bosnia. That was it. Two hours. It's in the notes. There's a memcon. I assume you have it.

DC: From the lunch. The system here would just give us the lunch. They didn't give us the memcon on the one-on-one.

CH: They don't seem to have it. They've been very forthcoming.

DC: This is from the S system.

ST: Try the D system.

CH: Okay.

PHIL GOLDBERG (PG): They may have not been found in the search because we were looking for Bosnia stuff, not Russia.

DC: Well, we went back and we requested every Clinton-Yeltsin memcon or telcon or anything.

ST: And you guys, I assume, have some sort of inter-agency mandate to do this, right?

CH: No, we don't have that.

ST: Oh, we've got to be very careful there. I mean, because the White House is understandably very proprietary about Presidential memcons. If you get a White House blessing for this, we can certainly help you get them.

CH: We figured we'll take what we've got at home here and establish some credibility before approaching the White House.

ST: The lunch memcon is misleading in three respects. One is that they deliberately wanted to use the lunch to do a lot of other business. Economic issues. Two, they wanted to gloss over the extent to which Russia had basically folded and embraced our position on Bosnia. Three, the President of the Russian Federation was increasingly inebriated. So for all those reasons you really must have the memcon.

DC: Yes. I agree.

CH: We should call up. On an *ad hoc* basis we've gotten some things so this is helpful to identify it. Now jumping to the big picture. This was the US senior administration officials saying we've got to take a leading role in this and State knew a lot about that solution on it. Not an easy decision, I think...

ST: On which?

CH: On launching a peace initiative and seeing it through.

ST: And being willing to do anything necessary to make it so, right?

CH: Yes. We did that. You were there for part of that and scoped it out, saw what was being developed?

ST: I only went to Dayton once.

CH: On November 6th.

ST: That's right.

CH: If you had to do it all over again, what would you recommend? This has been a huge investment on the part of the US -- to take the lead -- and if it falls apart, it's clearly going to be seen as a US failure, so the stakes are very high. What's your sense of lessons learned? Let's leave it general.

ST: One huge mistake: we did it about two years too late. The biggest regret, I think, of everybody involved is that we didn't act in '93. Now, you know, the constellation in the sky was quite different and I can make excuses with the best of them. We were also making excuses why we didn't do it in '93. I was around in '93 and I was on the Christopher trip to Europe in May. In a way, it took the intervening failures to create the conditions for the eventual success. We still should have gone in earlier, that's the biggest thing. Some other things, should we have done a better job on the police?

CH: Yes, sure.

ST: Should we have left ourselves a little more room on the exit strategy? Probably so. We are kind of rewriting the record on that now. I think we should not have kicked the can down the road quite as much as we did.

CH: That's really helpful.

ST: And as I say, Chris, when you get ready to do this again, a couple of days in advance, show me some areas so I can be thinking about that. That in itself will break loose some memories.

CH: Okay. I can easily promise that since I won't have to follow through. Derek is getting the baton in a few days.

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ST: Good. Well, I think this is a terrific thing. I wish we did this with more of our policies.

CH: We're trying to figure out how to do it right so that it's possible to do it in other cases.

PG: Will there be a Dayton History History Project? *(laughter)*

END OF INTERVIEW

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