

# Gingrich gang could wreck Bosnia talks

by Umberto Pascali

A Republican bill introduced in the House by Joel Hefley (Colo.), and boosted by political extremist Newt Gingrich (Ga.), as his latest personal salvo against President Clinton, risks sabotaging the peace negotiations on Bosnia-Herzegovina, which are presently in their most delicate phase at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The bill would forbid any decision by the President to deploy ground troops in Bosnia, unless funds were specifically appropriated by the Congress for that particular mission.

Such an action would deprive the President of his constitutional authority to conduct foreign policy. But not only that. It has been publicly stated that the negotiating parties—especially the main victims of the Greater Serbian genocide, the Bosnians—would accept a general peace agreement only if that agreement were guaranteed by an American military presence, as opposed to the British or the British-dominated U.N. forces, which actually favored the genocide. Gingrich did not make a secret of his total disregard of the strategic consequences, in his hysterical determination to hit the President. “Either Colin Powell or Bob Dole could get a ‘yes’ vote through the Congress easily. Whether or not Clinton could get [it], I don’t know.”

On Nov. 16, White House spokesman Mike McCurry stressed that “this action by the United States Congress not only threatens the talks in Dayton, but it . . . affects the likelihood of getting a peace agreement. So this is now going to be a choice between moving ahead with talks that could lead to peace, versus a return to war.” And State Department spokesman Nick Burns echoed: “It is entirely unreasonable and unwarranted for the Congress to pass a bill this week that could impair the ability of American diplomats to make peace.”

## Open debate on war danger

Despite the theatrics of Speaker of the House Gingrich and his followers, the real issue with Bosnia is the danger of a general war, and in fact a world war. Two of the most powerful world leaders, Pope John Paul II and Bill Clinton, have warned of that danger. (see *Documentation*). “Mr. President, don’t let this century end with [another] war in Sarajevo,” the Pope told Clinton, comparing the present situation to the beginning of World War I. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott went into an abundance of historical details about how a general war could escalate out of Bosnia, if the United States does not assert its power against the authors of

the genocide.

“There are some who say that these talks can only end in failure,” said Secretary of State Warren Christopher in the opening statement of the Dayton talks. “They have written off the Balkans as a region cursed by its past. . . . I have heard those arguments before in the Middle East, where the Arabs and the Israelis are now ending an armed conflict that has lasted ten times as long as the conflict in former Yugoslavia. I have heard these same comments applied to Northern Ireland. . . . I have heard the same comments applied to South Africa. . . .”

Christopher also stressed that “the settlement must take into account the special history and special significance of the city and environs of Sarajevo.” And he warned: “Sarajevo was the city where the first of this century’s two bloody wars began. . . . If the war in the Balkans is re-ignited, it could spark a wider conflict, like those that drew American soldiers to Europe in huge numbers twice this century. If it continues, and certainly if it spreads, it would jeopardize our efforts to promote peace and stability in Europe. It would threaten the viability of NATO. . . . If the conflict continues, so would the worst atrocities that Europe has seen since World War II.”

Indeed, while the talks in Dayton are proceeding on an uneven path, and the future of the martyred Bosnians is in the balance, the debate is focusing on the real issue: how the slaughter of Bosnia was triggered and used to provoke a broader conflict, a world war. Though Warren Christopher did not mention the devil by name, what is common to his four examples—Bosnia, the Middle East, North Ireland, and South Africa—is the British authorship of the conflict.

The debate is finally on the issue of who is really responsible for the war and genocide in Bosnia, and why. The British elite is desperately trying to prevent a situation from developing in which their hot spots are neutralized, and the real structure of the modern British empire is left “without options,” ready to be swept aside by a peace process.

This is the real role of political extremist Gingrich and his disciples, when they go on an all-out assault against U.S. foreign policy.

## Political tricks, Chamberlain-style

The power of the historical parallel with the explosion of this century’s world wars, cannot be ignored. Rep. Floyd Spence (R-S.C.) the chairman of the House National Security Committee, who is conducting wildly partisan anti-Clinton hearings on the subject of “U.S. Troops to Bosnia,” couldn’t escape that key point.

“Unfortunately,” he said on Nov. 16, “some in the administration continue to raise the ghost of this century’s world wars in arguing why America must send ground troops to Bosnia. . . . Secretary Christopher stated that Sarajevo was once the spark that ignited the entire continent. But he would appear to be confusing the initial spark with the raging fire that followed. Unless the great powers, themselves, provide the fuel,

as they did earlier this century, there will be no great conflagration. The wider Balkan war we've been hearing about for several years simply has not come to pass." Ergo, the United States should not get involved in Bosnia, and should leave things to the forces of the geopolitical "free market."

Obviously a "great power"—the current version of the British Empire—has been providing all the fuel possible to the war in Croatia and Bosnia, and obviously, by irrationally denying the evidence, Gingrich and Co. are contributing—as did British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in his dealings with Hitler—to allowing the explosion to take place.

In this moment of terrible strategic danger, the negotiations in Dayton could be the beginning of the solution. But interference and sabotage, like that of Gingrich, are making the situation even more volatile. The internal pressure could also induce the U.S. mediators to push for peace at any cost, depriving them of the margin of maneuverability that could make the difference between real peace and a mere truce in the war.

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## Documentation

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### 'This century began with a war in Sarajevo'

*From remarks by President Clinton at the White House on Oct. 31, the day before the beginning of the Bosnia "Proximity Talks" in Dayton, Ohio:*

I have just met with Secretary Christopher and our Bosnia negotiating team, led by Ambassador Holbrooke. As you know, they are preparing to leave for Dayton, Ohio, in just a few moments. . . . I want to repeat today what I told President Tudjman and President Izetbegovic when we met in New York last week. We have come to a defining moment in Bosnia. It may be the last chance we have for a very long time. . . . We will succeed only if America continues to lead. . . . We can't stop now. The responsibilities of leadership are real, but the benefits are greater. We see them all around the world: a reduced nuclear threat . . . peace breaking out in the Middle East and in Northern Ireland. . . .

Earlier this month in New Jersey, I had the privilege of spending time with His Holiness Pope Paul—Pope John Paul II. At the end of our meeting, the pope said something to me I would like to repeat. He said, "You know, I am not a young man. I have lived through most of this century. This century began with a war in Sarajevo. Mr. President, you must not let it end with a war in Sarajevo."

All of us must do our part to hear the pope's plea. Our conscience as a nation devoted to freedom and tolerance

demands it. Our conscience as a nation that wants to end this mindless slaughter demands it. Our enduring interest in the security and stability of Europe demands it. This is our challenge, and I am determined to do everything I can to see that America meets that challenge. . . .

*From the Remarks of Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott at the State Department Foreign Policy Town Meeting on Nov. 1:*

Some legislators have even suggested diverting the money that we now spend on foreign aid to the construction of a giant fence along our borders. Ponder, if you will, the symbolism of that misguided sense of priorities. The instinct here is to wall us in and to wall the rest of the world out. The instinct is to build barriers to ensure that what happens elsewhere—either far away or right next door—does not affect us here in the United States.

This view is anathema to President Clinton and his administration. . . . So the American Congress and the American people now face some fundamental choices. At issue is whether we are prepared to do what it takes—and that often means spending what it takes—to have a foreign policy that is worthy of our aspirations, our opportunities, and our interests. . . . I want to use the remainder of my remarks here this morning to address the question—much in debate—of why we must lead both in the negotiation of a Bosnian peace settlement and in the implementation of a settlement, if we are able to reach one.

Quite simply, Bosnia matters to everyone here today. It matters to everyone in America. It matters because Europe matters to America. . . . If the fighting in Bosnia resumes . . . it could plunge the entire area into war. Now that clear and present danger has about it an aspect of historical *déjà vu*. I say that because the worst of the 20th century might be said to have begun with a series of bad-news stories, datelined Sarajevo, more than 80 years ago. I'm referring to the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, followed by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, and all that followed that event.

Now, there is a very real danger that we will inadvertently close out this century with gruesome symmetry, by permitting a third Balkan war. Such a conflagration could all too easily spread well beyond the Balkans. History and geography have conspired to make Bosnia the most explosive powder keg on the continent of Europe.

The Drina River, which flows through the now famous town of Gorazde and along the border between Bosnia and Serbia, traces one of the world's most treacherous fault lines. The three communities that live there—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims—bear the legacies of two empires, three religions, and many cultures. That means if the warfare among them breaks out anew and then continues unabated, it might well extend to several points. . . . Albania could intervene to protect the ethnic Albanians who live in the Serbian southern province of Kosova. Warfare there could unleash a massive

flow of refugees into Macedonia, destabilizing that fragile country and potentially drawing into the conflict on opposite sides Greece and Turkey, two of our NATO allies who also happen to be regional rivals. A widening of the war might also see Hungary tempted to come in to rescue ethnic Hungarians in the Vojvodina region of northern Serbia.

Now, let me stress that Bosnia also matters very much beyond the borders of Europe itself. The entire Islamic world, from Morocco to Indonesia, is watching to see how events in Bosnia unfold. Muslims everywhere are waiting to see if their co-religionists in Bosnia will be accorded the same rights and protections as other Europeans. The answer to that question could have a very real impact on the future of moderate, pro-western leaders such as Prime Minister Ciller of Turkey and Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan. . . .

An ongoing conflict in the Balkans would jeopardize our efforts to promote stability and security in Europe as a whole. . . .

If the fighting in Yugoslavia resumes, and if it escalates and spreads, it will put increasing strain on relations between the United States and Russia. A third Balkan war would undermine both of our overarching strategic objectives in that part of the world. Those objectives are first, to promote integration between East and West, and second, and simultaneously, to contain and deter the forces of disintegration that have been unleashed by the collapse of Communism in the East. . . .

A continuation of the war would also threaten the viability, and I would say even the survival, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. . . . The alliance can no more ignore the conflagration in the Balkans than an architect can ignore a fire that is raging in one wing of a building on which he is working. And the United States is the leader of the alliance; therefore, the United States must also lead in Bosnia. Merely hoping that the fire there will burn itself out, or that somebody else will come along and put it out, is not just wishful thinking; it would be, if it were the basis of policy, extremely irresponsible and deeply harmful to our national interest.

Such an attitude of standing aside and passing the buck would put us in triple jeopardy. . . .

As we ponder those costs and risks let us also keep in mind those associated with inaction, particularly inaction or inadequate action in the face of systematic atrocities being carried out in our own time. I'm referring to mass rape, concentration camps, massacres, forced deportations of entire villages. . . . The Yugoslavs may not have invented the phrase "ethnic cleansing," but they have inscribed it into the glossary of this century, right there next to "final solution" as an administrative euphemism for genocide. . . . I believe, is a very important point—the unacceptability of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans by that or any other name is not just an issue of *Moralpolitik*; it's also an issue of *Realpolitik*. [To allow the genocide in Bosnia] would be a disaster not only for that region, but it would also be ominous for the former Soviet empire, where similar dark forces of what might be

called Balkanization are vying with the forces of freedom to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of communist totalitarianism. . . .

So, ladies and gentlemen, for all these reasons, ending the war in Bosnia is unquestionably in the national interest of the United States. We have been working toward that objective since the beginning of this administration, but only recently have our efforts shown real promise. President Clinton has long pressed for the vigorous use of NATO air power as a necessary component of peacemaking. . . . Meanwhile, U.S. and NATO war planes, no longer grounded by the dual key, reinforced the message that the time had come to stop the killing and start talking about the terms for a lasting political settlement. . . .

And on Monday of last week, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin reached a landmark agreement: Russian and U.S. forces will participate together in the implementation of a Bosnian peace. [On Oct. 27, Defense Secretary] Bill Perry and his Russian counterpart Pavel Grachov hammered out many of the details. Russia and the United States will each contribute several thousand soldiers to a special operations unit under the command of U.S. Army Gen. George Joulwan. That unit will provide vital engineering, reconstruction, road building, bridge repair, mine clearing, and heavy lift services for the implementation effort. It represents the most concrete example of U.S.-Russian military cooperation in the post-Cold War era.

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