

# Lessons of Bosnia

In 1995, Bosnia became an international protectorate – effectively a NATO colony. David Chandler, in his book *Bosnia - faking democracy after Dayton* analyses the results.

The US is applying lessons learned from the Bosnia experiment to the governing of Kosovo today.

NATO intervention was presented as a crusade to 'democratise' Bosnia and end ethnic strife. In reality, it was designed to suppress one national group — the Bosnian Serbs — who make up nearly a third of the population. Chandler details how in reality all important decisions are taken by the High Representative who is appointed by agreement between the US and the European Union. The High Representative directly imposes legislation, vetoes candidates in elections and dismisses 'unco-operative' elected members of Bosnian governing bodies.

The merit of this book lies in its attention to the Dayton Agreement and its implementation. Chandler quotes Madeleine Albright: 'to a great extent the Dayton Accords and the peace process they built were made in America', and explains that Clinton, the US Department of Defence and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were the key players. He argues that Bosnia provides a testing ground for external intervention: 'The peace agreement signed at Dayton was

unlike any other peace treaty of modern times, not merely because it was imposed by powers external to the conflict, but because of the far-reaching powers given to the international community which extended well beyond military matters to cover the most basic aspects of the state.' The Bosnian Muslims, heavily dependent on US support, supported the Dayton Agreement. The Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Radko Mladic had been indicted for war crimes, ensuring they would not be able to travel abroad, leaving Milosevic as their representative. Facing international sanctions, Milosevic signed the Agreement. Tudjman imposed a settlement on the Bosnian Croats in exchange for the freedom to expel Croatian Serbs from western Slavonia and the Krajina.

The annexes to the Dayton Agreement stipulate the right of IFOR to 'complete and unimpeded movement' throughout Bosnia with no liability for damage to property; granting NATO personnel legal immunity for their actions 'under



all circumstances and at all times'; and allowing powers to the OSCE to 'supervise' elections far beyond its role in other eastern European states. Article VII allowed the IMF to appoint the Governor of the Central Bank for six years, and specifically excluded any citizens of Bosnia or any neighbouring state.

Dayton was due to expire in September 1996 after the elections. But although the elections were internationally supervised and ratified, international administration was extended for a further 2 years, and then extended indefinitely in December 1997. This extension has been accompanied by a growing reference to the 'spirit of Dayton' which extends its powers further. As the only parties bound by the Dayton Agreement are the Bosnians, the international institutions overseeing and implementing the Agreement have no fixed limits. Carlos Westendorp, UN High Representative, is quoted in the book as stating: 'If you read Dayton very carefully...Annex 10 even gives me the possibility to interpret my own authorities and powers'. He explains 'you do not [have] power handed to you on a platter. You just seize it, if you use this power well, no one will contest it. I have already achieved this'. NATO's mandate, due to end on 20 December 1996, was also extended unilaterally.

The effect of 'power sharing' and 'multi-ethnic administration', argues Chandler, is one which allows disputes to be settled by the High Representative, rather than by majority decision. Consensus is presented as obligatory and dissent as illegitimate obstruction. Westendorp is quoted as describing the Bosnian leaders as 'like animals who cling to their turf'. Croatian, Muslim and Serb leaders have all accused the UN High Representative and leading international institutions of breaking the Dayton Agreement.

Although tensions between the Croat-Muslim Federation and the UN High Representative are well documented in the book, it is the intervention into Republika Srpska which has been most brutal. As Chandler says: 'The

central area of dispute with the Office of the High Representative was over the powers and authority that elected representatives could wield over the entity. The desire for greater autonomy was considered as a 'pretence of statehood' by the High Representative and therefore contrary to the Dayton Agreement. Of particular concern was legislation on the economy and citizenship. Republika Srpska's desire to extend citizenship to residents of the former Yugoslavia, for example, Serb refugees from the Croatian Krajina, was resisted by the legal department of the OHR. Ties between the federation and

troops were used to engineer the election of a pro-Dayton Prime Minister by intercepting a member of the parliament and returning them for the vote. The book also details the intervention into elections — from engineering a split in the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) to funding pro-Dayton forces and closing down television stations run by the Serb Democratic Party for commenting on the war crimes tribunals. It also shows how the war crimes tribunals have been used to remove nationalist leaders: 'the indictment of Karadzic was part of an ongoing US-led campaign to replace the Serb leadership, based in Pale, with more moderate Serbs based in Banja Luka'. The removal of Karadzic from election literature 'was also intended to weaken the electoral support given to [SDS], which had to rely on the promotion of other individuals less well known...the importance attached to banning references and photos of Karadzic also contributed to the idea that the Bosnian Serbs had so little understanding of human rights that an image might set them on the path to violence'.

Research carried out by Chandler exposed the 'evidence' behind a paper detailing accusations against SDS leaders; 'words and phrases such as 'believed to be', 'rumoured', 'reported to be', 'may involve', 'allegedly', and 'unsubstantiated' run right through the document. Evidence against people included being 'vehemently opposed to the Dayton Peace Agreement and known to be openly defiant about it' or being 'uncompromising in his views'. However, despite the lack of hard evidence the press-released summary stated that: 'the national and local political leadership of Republika Srpska as well as the state organs and agencies under its control... are responsible for directing, aiding and abetting continuing human rights abuses'.

The economic effects of the Dayton Agreement are also highlighted. Republika Srpska, with nearly one third of the population, receives only 5 per cent of the international

reconstruction aid to Bosnia. At the start of 1998, while the Federation's economic output was only half the 1990 level, that of Republika Srpska was a quarter of the 1990 level. The average wage in RS is 25 per cent that of the Federation's.

Chandler explains that by attacking the political capacity of the Bosnian people, imperialism can justify extending its control. Westendorp is quoted as saying in his 1998 New Year message: 'As High Representative, I have to take decisions now and in the future with your best interests in mind, should your leaders fail to take them.'

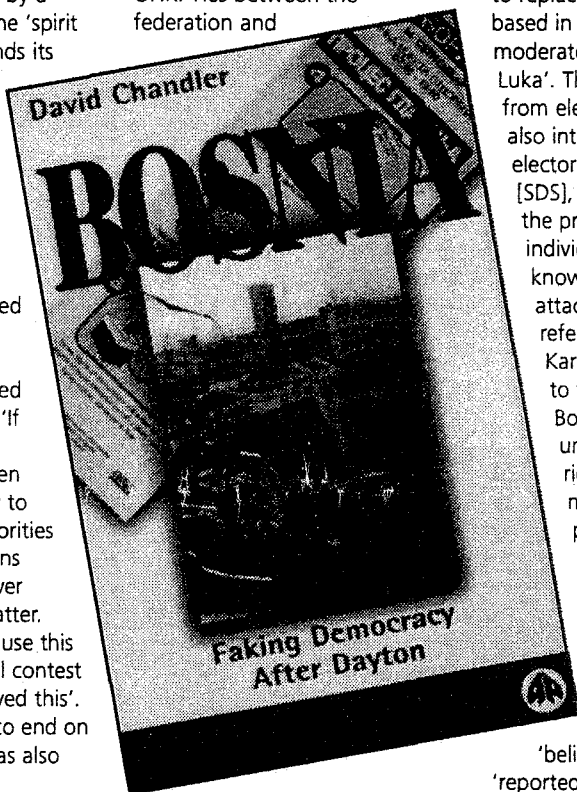
The significance of Bosnia in the new world order after 1989 is not minimised: 'Bosnia has been the focus through which international relations has been reconstituted after the cold war: political restrictions on German military actions were removed, allowing involvement outside NATO frontiers for the first time since the defeat of Nazism; NATO's strike against the Bosnian Serbs was the first NATO combat action since its founding...In 1991, there were no foreign troops in south east Europe; by May 1997, there were deployments in southern Hungary, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania, apart from Bosnia.'

The lessons from the Dayton Agreement are important for the future of Kosovo. Kosovo is far easier for the US to control if 'ethnically cleansed' of Serbs and Roma. The Dayton Agreement is not a blueprint for Kosovo, but the project used to justify continuing imperialist intervention into the region — to 'democratise' and deal with 'human rights violations' — remains the same and the US will apply lessons learned from Bosnia to Kosovo. The continuing demonisation of the Serbs, from Bosnia to Kosovo, is intended to help neutralise international opposition to the continuing attacks on Yugoslavia.

Chandler's book is a vital contribution to exposing imperialism's role in the former Yugoslavia and spells out the colonialism used to justify this intervention.

**By Rachel Garvey**

Bosnia — faking democracy after Dayton. David Chandler, Pluto Press £14.99



Croatia are encouraged, but 'special relations' between Republika Srpska and Serbia are described as destructive. Former High Representative Carl Bildt is quoted as stating that the people in Republika Srpska were in a fortunate situation because they were part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and only this could save them from 'economic catastrophe'. The IMF programme for the economy insisted on maintaining the fixed exchange rate and preventing credit creation; no government domestic borrowing; politically dependent funding for economic reconstruction, and structural and legal reforms to rapidly facilitate transition to a market economy.

Chandler explains how NATO