

Madeleine's War: Operation Allied Force

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Secretary Albright, thank you for being able to redeem the lessons of your life story by standing up for the freedom of the people in the Balkans.

–President William J. Clinton¹

The president's words were included in a *Time* magazine article entitled "Madeleine's War." In the same article, Ms. Albright was asked about the reference to the conflict as "her war." She replied: "Well, I don't think it's solely mine. But I feel that we did the right thing, and I am proud of the role I played in it."² Certainly others were important on the road to Operation Allied Force, but the secretary's role is a good place to start.

Born Madeleine Korbela to Jewish parents in Czechoslovakia in 1937, Ms. Albright would make two escapes from totalitarian dictators before her twelfth birthday. In March 1939, her father, Josef, took the family to London to ride out World War II.³ The war left deep impressions on Albright, and Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia was a seminal event in her family's life. She would later say: "My mindset was Munich [referring to Neville Chamberlain's 1938 appeasement of Hitler]; most of my generation's was Vietnam."⁴ During a 1998 foreign ministers' conference on Kosovo, an aide suggested that the United States could probably accept "softer" language being proposed for a communiqué to Slobodan Milosevic. Her retort was: "Where do you think we are, Munich?"⁵

Josef Korbela and family returned to Czechoslovakia after World War II, and he was posted to Belgrade as the Czech ambassador from 1945-48. With the fall of Czechoslovakia to a Communist coup, the family traveled to New York in November 1948, and were subsequently granted asylum in the United States.⁶ They settled in Denver, where Josef would ultimately become the Dean of the Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver.

Ms. Albright attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts, graduating with honors in political science in 1959. Three days after graduation, she married Joseph Albright, a wealthy member of a newspaper dynasty. In 1961, Joseph took a job with a paper in Long Island, *Newsday*, and between 1961 and 1967, Ms. Albright gave birth to three daughters, including a set of twins. She also enrolled in a graduate studies program at Columbia University, where one of her professors was Zbigniew Brzezinski, who would later serve as President Carter's National Security Advisor (NSA). Ms. Albright earned a master's degree in 1968 and began studies for her doctoral dissertation on the role of the press in the 1968 "Prague

Spring” uprising. Later that year, Joseph was promoted to Washington bureau chief for *Newsday*, and the family moved to D.C.⁷

In Washington, Ms. Albright accepted the task of organizing a fund raising dinner for Senator Edmund Muskie’s unsuccessful 1972 presidential bid. By 1976, she had completed her Ph.D. from Columbia and had been hired as Muskie’s chief legislative assistant. Muskie was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and thus, Ms. Albright spent a substantial amount of her time dealing with foreign affairs. In 1978, she moved to the Brzezinski National Security Council (NSC) staff, serving as a congressional liaison focusing on foreign policy legislation.⁸ In 1983, Joseph and Madeleine were divorced, but a generous settlement left Ms. Albright comfortably ensconced in the nation’s capital.⁹

During the Reagan/Bush years, Ms. Albright ran the Women in Foreign Service Program at Georgetown University, garnering four “teacher of the year” awards, a record for Georgetown. During those same years, she began hosting dinners in her Georgetown home for some of the leading Democratic politicians, including Bill Clinton, then governor of Arkansas.¹⁰ In 1989, Albright sponsored Clinton’s application for membership to the Council of Foreign Relations. In 1989, she was named president of a liberal Democratic think tank, the Center for National Policy, becoming a frequent talk show guest and Republican administration critic. She opposed the Gulf War, arguing that President Bush had unwisely “personalized” the conflict with Saddam, and Albright was quoted as stating: “All problems can’t be solved by bombing the bejesus out of some small country.”¹¹

During the summer of 1992, she worked with Warren Christopher, Anthony Lake, and Samuel Berger in developing foreign policy position papers for the campaign.¹² She also served on a commission sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to suggest directions for United States foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. Ms. Albright’s fellow participants in the project included many prominent Democrats who would later serve in the Clinton administration, including Henry Cisneros, John Deutch, Richard Holbrooke, Alice Rivlin, David Gergen, and Admiral William Crowe.¹³ The commission report, *Changing Our Ways: America and the New World*, suggested, among other things, that United States policy should seek to: “. . . establish a new principle of international relations: The destruction or displacement of groups of peoples within states can justify international intervention. The United States should strengthen the collective machinery to carry out humanitarian actions.”¹⁴ The general thrust of the commission report seems, in retrospect, to read much like the first Clinton *National Security Strategy* of “Engagement and Enlargement.” In the summer of 1992, candidate Clinton also seemed to echo elements of the report, calling for more forceful action in Bosnia, including possible use of force.¹⁵

It was no surprise that Madeleine Albright obtained a high-level appointment in the Clinton administration. Appointing Albright as U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N., President Clinton restored that position to cabinet rank with a seat on the NSC, and Albright attended most Principals’ Committee meetings of the NSC.¹⁶ Veteran political correspondent for *The Washington Post*, Mary McGrory, praised her as “an intellectual . . . with a

heart” and asserted: “She is precisely the kind of woman everyone wished could have been in the room when the men were making their disastrous decisions about Vietnam.”¹⁷

Ms. Albright soon established a reputation as one of the new administration’s most “hawkish” members. An advocate of what she then termed “assertive multilateralism,” she reportedly confronted then-Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Chairman Powell with the question: “What’s the point of having this superb military you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?”¹⁸ As early as April 1993, she sent a memorandum to the White House urging air strikes to protect Muslims in Bosnia, and she argued strongly to stay the course in Somalia as violence mounted in August 1993.¹⁹ The October 1993 debacle in Somalia apparently did not diminish her enthusiasm for a muscular United States foreign policy. Shortly after the deaths of the Rangers in Mogadishu, she remained an advocate for a forceful response in Haiti after the USS *Harlan County* had been prevented from docking in Port-au-Prince.²⁰ Ms. Albright claimed that she had also argued strongly for a more forceful role in Rwanda. Years later, she told Sunday talk show host Cokie Roberts: “I followed instructions because I was an ambassador, but I screamed about the instructions that I got on this.”²¹ Ironically, her Rwanda position seemed to have been closer to the “right answer” in retrospect and may have enhanced her standing in the administration.

When Polish-born General Shalikashvili became the JCS chairman in late October 1993, Czech-born Albright found a much more congenial colleague than Colin Powell, by virtue of both heritage and philosophy. Albright developed a close relationship with the chairman during her time at the U.N..²² The new chairman was also more flexible than Powell on use of force issues, and one pundit would later claim that the U.N. ambassador and chairman: “pushed the administration away from the doctrine of the former chairman . . . Powell.”²³

Another Albright ally came more by virtue of philosophy than personal congeniality. Richard Holbrooke was a natural Albright ally on both NATO enlargement and Bosnia. Holbrooke acted as the “enforcer” to shepherd NATO expansion through the bureaucracy, and he was also aligned with Albright’s position for more forceful United States action in Bosnia.²⁴

Despite parallel views, two dynamics served to distance Albright and Holbrooke. One source of friction between Albright and Holbrooke was reportedly Holbrooke’s obvious “self-aggrandizement.” Former press spokesman Mike McCurry relates: “It was amazing to behold how relentlessly self promotional Holbrooke was.”²⁵ Another, perhaps more severe, source of conflict was that Albright and Holbrooke found themselves in competition for the same jobs. In the first Clinton administration, Holbrooke was reportedly bitterly disappointed with netting only an ambassadorship. After the 1996 election, Holbrooke was on the “short list” for secretary of state and favored by Vice President Gore and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. Madeleine Albright ultimately obtained that prize after several women’s groups lobbied Gore, noting that it was women who had delivered the election to the Clinton/Gore team.²⁶

No one can be sure exactly why President Clinton decided to nominate Albright as secretary of state. Certainly the legacy of appointing the highest-ranking woman to have ever served in the government must have been attractive, and it was reported that Madeleine was the favorite of the president's wife, Hillary. A Clinton confidant told reporters, however, that the "chemistry" of the 1996 National Security Team (Albright, Cohen, Berger) was part of the rationale for Albright's selection, as was her reputation as, "a smart, tough cookie who stands up and says her piece."²⁷

The new secretary of state lost no time in establishing herself as one of the superstars of the second Clinton administration. At her swearing in on 23 January 1997, she cautioned that the United States: "must not shy from the mantle of leadership, nor hesitate to defend our interests . . ."²⁸ Just weeks later she was being termed: "the most media-savvy secretary of state since Henry Kissinger," and former President Gerald Ford called her, "the Tiger Woods of foreign policy."²⁹ By early summer she was the most popular member of the Clinton administration, exceeding the president and vice president with over 65 percent of Americans reporting "favorable" ratings.³⁰ She also became a favorite with the U.S. Congress. She developed a close personal relationship with the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), and they came to be called the "odd couple" of American diplomacy. That relationship paid off with Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 1997.³¹ Securing the NATO-Russia Founding Act in May and the invitations to enlarge NATO in July 1997 were further feathers in her cap.³² When the Senate, with surprisingly little rancor, ratified NATO expansion the following year, Albright achieved one of her greatest triumphs.³³

Of course, success was not without its detractors. Some White House officials thought that she "hogged credit" for diplomatic successes. One complained to a reporter: "Nobody minds when Madeleine throws out the first pitch at ball games or puts on Stetson hats, but what bugs people around here is her good press at the president's expense."³⁴ This friction resulted in some criticism that she let her rhetoric get ahead of administration policy. It was, of course, the same style that put her in a position to ultimately become associated with the Kosovo conflict as "Madeleine's War."

According to Serbian legend, on 28 June 1389 at Kosovo Polje (the Field of Blackbirds), the leader of the Serbian army, Prince Lazar, was offered a choice between a kingdom on earth or a kingdom in heaven. Lazar chose the heavenly kingdom, and the Serbs were subsequently slaughtered by the Ottoman Turks, beginning over five hundred years of Serbian subjugation to the Ottomans. Even in defeat, the Serbs came to view themselves as the people who had saved Europe, containing the Ottoman push north.³⁵

Both Albanians and Serbs have historic claims to Kosovo, but the twentieth century history is more pertinent to today's conflict. Serbia obtained control of the Kosovo region after the First Balkan War of 1912. After World War I, the state of Yugoslavia was formed, including Kosovo as part of Serbia. The Nazi occupation during World War II saw atrocities

committed on both sides, with Croats and Albanians generally aligned with the Axis and the Serbs aligned with the victorious Allies.³⁶ Josef Broz Tito established a communist state following World War II and managed to contain Yugoslavia's ethnic rivalries. Even with Tito's iron hand, there were violent Albanian student demonstrations in late 1968, leading to greater autonomy for Kosovo and, ultimately, to the 1974 constitution that granted wide autonomy to the province. After Tito's death in 1980, there were riots in Pristina in March 1981, with demands that Kosovo be granted republic status.³⁷

Over the years of 1966 to 1989, when ethnic Albanians enjoyed substantial autonomy, an estimated 130,000 Serbs left Kosovo because of harassment and discrimination by the majority Albanians.³⁸ The first organized protests of Kosovar Serbs took place in 1986 at Kosovo Polje, when 2,000 signed a petition to Belgrade demanding curbs to Albanian abuse. By April 1987, 60,000 Serbs signed another petition demanding greater rights for Kosovar Serbs.³⁹ In an effort to calm the protests, the communist leader of Serbia sent his trusted deputy Slobodan Milosevic to Kosovo to meet with the mostly Albanian party leaders. On 24 April, in what is widely believed to have been a carefully orchestrated event, a violent protest erupted outside the meeting hall. Milosevic emerged from the meeting and addressed the seething crowd who complained about beatings by the Kosovar police. He uttered the now-famous words: "No one will ever dare to beat you again."⁴⁰

Those words propelled Milosevic to the presidency of Serbia by September 1987 on a wave of Serbian nationalist pride. A prominent historian noted that: "by mid-1988 . . . Milosevic enjoyed a popularity greater than any Serbian political figure in this century."⁴¹ In March 1989, he gained further popularity by pushing through a new constitution, stripping Kosovo of the autonomy it had gained under Tito. Milosevic's meteoric rise to power, heavy-handedness in Kosovo, and extreme nationalist rhetoric were all key factors in the ensuing breakup of Yugoslavia.

The first Bush administration's reaction to the breakup of Yugoslavia, beginning with Slovenia and Croatia's declaration of independence in 1991, was that it was essentially a European problem. That attitude is perhaps best captured in then-Secretary of State James Baker's remark: "We don't have a dog in that fight." That attitude did not, however, extend to Kosovo, which was prominent in everyone's "nightmare scenario" from the very beginning of the breakup. The worst-case scenario for the Balkans was projected as: 1) the Albanian majority in Kosovo would attempt to break away; 2) the Serbs would quash the attempt causing massive refugee flows into Albania and Macedonia; 3) leading to a wider war involving Greece and Turkey on opposite sides; 4) that would cause the dissolution of NATO. This imagined scenario was credible enough by 24 December 1992 for President Bush to issue his famous "Christmas Warning" to Milosevic that stated: "In the event of conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the United States will be prepared to employ military force against Serbians in Kosovo and in Serbia proper." That warning was reiterated by Secretary of State Warren Christopher in February and July of 1993.⁴²

Meanwhile in Kosovo, the situation on the ground was evolving better than any of the policy makers might have hoped. Rather than armed defiance of the re-imposition of Serb

rule, the Kosovar Albanians initially chose passive resistance, thanks to the leader of the most prominent Kosovar Albanian political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). The LDK was founded in 1989, and its leader, Ibrahim Rugova, was committed to attaining Kosovo's independence through resistance rather than force. Establishing parallel state structures, with a president, parliament, taxation, medical, and education systems, Rugova was elected president in a unsanctioned referendum in 1992.⁴³ Rugova and the LDK apparently thought that demonstrating their ability to run the province would convince the West that they, too, deserved independence.⁴⁴

Kosovo could not have happened as it did without the agony of Bosnia. The war in Bosnia was inherited by the Clinton administration as its most intractable foreign policy problem. In early 1993, United States forces were limited to patrolling a no-fly zone termed Operation Deny Flight and a maritime exclusion zone called Operation Sharp Guard. The United States began to take a more active role after thirty-four civilians were killed in the shelling of a Sarajevo marketplace in February 1994. Later that spring the Contact Group was formed, consisting of the United States, Russia, UK, France, Germany, and Italy, and diplomatic focus shifted from the EC/U.N. to the Contact Group. Thus the United States was now directly engaged with its prestige increasingly on the line. By the fall of 1994, the United States and NATO began to plan for a peacekeeping force that would enter Bosnia upon agreement by all sides. NATO continued planning for a variety of military actions, including extraction of U.N. peacekeepers and various air strike options to protect U.N.-designated "Safe Havens" or coerce the parties to the table.

As the spring of 1995 approached, conditions within Bosnia seemed to deteriorate. U.N. peacekeepers were sporadically held hostage, and Bosnian Serb advances threatened several *safe havens* and even the capital of Sarajevo itself. Although NATO aircraft did receive approval for some limited air strikes, the approval process through the U.N. administrators was seen as too cumbersome to be effective. The final straw came in July 1995 when Serb forces took over the Safe Haven of Srebrenica, with U.N. forces powerless to stop them and approval for air support coming too late to have any effect. To the embarrassment of all involved, Bosnian Serb forces methodically slaughtered at least seven thousand Bosnian Moslems.

Srebrenica, coupled with another mortar shell in early August in the same Sarajevo market as the 1994 disaster, provided the triggers for NATO Operation Deliberate Force, a series of strikes by aircraft and artillery lasting into mid-September. Deliberate Force occurred on the heels of a Croatian advance (with training and planning assistance from retired United States military personnel), which swept some two hundred thousand Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia near the northern border of Bosnia.⁴⁵ In the face of these attacks, Bosnian Serbs agreed to a ceasefire that eventually led to the Dayton Agreement in November 1995.

Bosnia seemed a foreign policy triumph for a president sorely in need of one. With the embarrassment over Somalia and Rwanda, an inconclusive and continuing engagement in Iraq, and an occupation in Haiti that seemed unable to restore health to the country, Bosnia

looked like the most successful gambit of the first Clinton administration. Moreover, for a president who by now favored NATO enlargement, NATO's effectiveness following U.N. impotence seemed to validate that initiative. Over time, "lessons" seemed to emerge from Bosnia, including the notions that Milosevic was susceptible to coercion by force (even though it was the Bosnian Serbs who were coerced) and that United States leadership was the "indispensable" factor in resolving international crises.

Whatever the rest of the world learned from Bosnia, there was at least one group—the Kosovar Albanians—who gleaned a very serious lesson indeed. The Dayton Agreement's failure to deal with Kosovo, while understandable given the difficulty and immediacy of Bosnia, may have been a trigger event of sorts for Kosovo. One Kosovar said:

We all feel a deep, deep sense of betrayal. We mounted a peaceful, civilized protest to fight the totalitarian rule of Milosevic. We did not go down the road of nationalist hatred The result is that we were ignored. [Dayton] taught us a painful truth, [that] those that want freedom must fight for it. This is our sad duty.⁴⁶

Another Kosovar put it this way: "We hope that NATO will intervene, like it did in Bosnia, to save us."⁴⁷ After Dayton, Ibrahim Rugova's movement for nonviolent change in Kosovo would slowly lose ground to more radical elements.

The *Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosoves* (UCK) in the Albanian language, or the more familiar Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), was founded by a small band of Albanian separatists in 1991. Their first armed attack killed two Serbian police officers in May 1993, and they claimed responsibility for attacks killing two policemen in April 1996. But until early 1998, the group consisted of no more than a couple of hundred fighters, some of whom had fought in Bosnia against the Serbs.⁴⁸ In January 1997, when the government of Albania began to crumble following collapse of a pyramid investment scheme, a new dimension was added to the mix. In the subsequent Albanian anarchy, thousands of weapons were looted from government armories, many of which ended up in KLA hands. By June 1997, a new government was formed and relative peace was restored to Albania following intervention by an Italian-led peacekeeping force. The deposed Albanian president retreated to his northern Albanian stronghold and offered his family farm as a base for the KLA.⁴⁹

In 1997, the KLA began to emerge from the shadows. On two nights in early September 1997, the most organized KLA attacks to date occurred, targeting ten separate police barracks and vehicles up to 150 km apart.⁵⁰ Uniformed KLA fighters first appeared in public on 28 November 1997 at the funeral of a school teacher killed by the Serbs, where the KLA men were cheered loudly by the crowd estimated at 20,000. The still-small band of fighters, drawn mainly from several clans, was concentrated in the Drenica region of central Kosovo. One of the clan leaders was Adem Jashari, who lived in the village of Prekaz. In the last days of February and first days of March 1998, a big step on the road to Operation Allied Force was taken when Serb forces massacred over eighty people in the Drenica region, including Jashari, twenty of his family members, and many other women and children.⁵¹ That focused

the world on Kosovo, but to understand United States decision making, one must also consider a couple of other stories that were unfolding in the early part of 1998.

One story centers around another nemesis of two United States administrations, Saddam Hussein. On 13 January 1998, Saddam denied entry to a U.N. inspection team, setting off another seemingly perennial crisis with Iraq. By early 1998, however, many Arab allies who had backed previous strikes were vocally opposed to military action. To make matters worse, in an effort to sell the idea of strikes to the American public, Madeleine Albright, William Cohen, and Sandy Berger appeared on 18 February 1998 on a live “town hall” meeting televised by CNN International. One reporter described it more like a “rumble,” with the national security team shouted down, booed, and generally received with skepticism.⁵² In the face of international opposition and public questioning, the administration seemed relieved when U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was able to reach agreement with Iraq on 23 February. Of course, troubles with Iraq were far from over, and that crisis would run contemporaneously with Kosovo over the next year, as would the other “big story” of 1998.

Albright had been in front of the cameras a month earlier, but that appearance wasn't about *foreign* affairs. On 19 January 1998, an internet gossip column first mentioned the name of Monica Lewinsky, and within two days it was carried by all news outlets, along with the president's denial of any impropriety. President Clinton met with his cabinet on 23 January 1998, and after Clinton's assurances, Secretary Albright led several cabinet members to a bank of microphones and declared: “I believe the allegations are completely untrue.”⁵³ The Lewinsky issue would also parallel the Kosovo crisis, and over a year later at least one reporter would claim of Ms. Albright: “She still resents that he [Clinton] allowed her to go before cameras early in the Lewinsky scandal and proclaim his innocence.”⁵⁴ By March 1998, however, Ms. Albright had more important matters in the Balkans on her mind.

On 23 February 1998, U.S. Special Balkans Envoy Robert Gelbard gave a press conference in Belgrade on his perspectives on the Balkan situation. After detailing progress in Bosnia and discussing the easing of several minor sanctions against Milosevic's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in recognition of FRY cooperation, he turned his attention to Kosovo. Gelbard said:

The violence we have seen growing in recent weeks and months is incredibly dangerous. The great majority of this violence we attribute to the police, but we are tremendously disturbed and also condemn very strongly the unacceptable violence done by terrorist groups in Kosovo and particularly the UCK—the Kosovo Liberation Army. *This is without any question a terrorist group . . .* [emphasis added]⁵⁵

Some observers later accused Gelbard of giving Milosevic an excuse for the Drenica massacres that occurred less than a week later. In subsequent testimony before Congress, Gelbard “clarified” his statement a bit, noting: “while it [the KLA] has committed terrorist acts [it has] not been classified legally by the United States government as a terrorist organization.”⁵⁶

In the wake of the Drenica massacres, one Albright aide told a reporter she had consciously decided to: “. . . lead through rhetoric,” targeting: “European allies, United States public opinion and her own government.”⁵⁷ On 7 March 1998, on a stopover in Rome on her way to a Contact Group meeting, Albright declared: “We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia.”⁵⁸ Two days later, in the same London conference room where many of the Bosnia deliberations were held, she told the Contact Group ministers: “History is watching us . . . In this very room our predecessors delayed as Bosnia burned, and history will not be kind to us if we do the same.”⁵⁹ The statement that came out of the 9 March 1998 Contact Group meeting sounded tough, expressing “shock, dismay, and deep concern,” and proposing an arms embargo on the FRY, denial of visas to senior FRY officials, and a moratorium on investment credits and trade.⁶⁰ Russia, however, had only agreed to the arms embargo, which was formalized in U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1160 on 31 March. Russia agreed to UNSCR 1160 only after all reference to: “threat to international peace and security” (which might be a justification for armed force) was deleted from the document.⁶¹

On the United States side, there was concern in some quarters, particularly the Pentagon, that Albright’s rhetoric might be getting ahead of policy. First there was the matter of the “Christmas Warning” that had threatened unilateral United States force. One defense official remarked, “the Christmas Warning was not on the table. We were not prepared for unilateral action.”⁶² Throughout the spring, Albright tried to build an administration consensus for a stronger challenge to Milosevic. She requested a mid-May 1998 meeting of the NSC Principals to discuss the problem. At the meeting, Special Envoy Gelbard presented the case for *threatening* air strikes against Milosevic. Gelbard noted that General Wes Clark, commander in chief, European Command (CINCEUR), had developed a list of targets that might be struck to force Milosevic’s cooperation. NSA Sandy Berger angrily rejected the idea, noting that NATO had not even begun planning for contingencies should air strikes fail to move Milosevic. After Berger’s outburst, not even Albright or her deputy Strobe Talbott came to Gelbard’s defense.⁶³

The Clinton administration found itself in a sticky position. On one hand, disaster in Kosovo with no effective NATO response could threaten the administration’s two seminal foreign policy achievements: the Dayton Agreement on Bosnia and NATO enlargement. On the other hand, those same two factors limited the administration’s options to those that could be sold to the allies. Even if Dayton seemed to create a *de facto* partitioned state, NATO used force to prevent (and continues to prevent through force) the *de jure* partition of the sovereign state of Bosnia. Support for partitioning Serbia and granting independence to Kosovo would create a precedent for partitioning Bosnia, not to mention precedent for similar ethnic claims throughout Europe, from Kurds in Turkey to Basques in Spain. Thus, there was no support for Kosovar independence, yet after Drenica, independence was the central goal of the Kosovar Albanians and the KLA.⁶⁴

Ironically, the meteoric rise of the KLA could only have occurred given the existence of Rugova’s LDK, the pacifist resistance that the KLA was about to supplant. Over the years of

“parallel government,” the Kosovar Albanians had organized effective internal structures, and as important, an external support network through the estimated 600,000 ethnic Albanians in Europe and 300,000 in Canada and the United States.⁶⁵ The “Homeland Calling Fund” and a “Republic of Kosovo In-exile” had been extracting a three per cent levy on the wages of the Albanian diaspora.⁶⁶ One source put the income from Germany alone at over one million dollars per month.⁶⁷ Thus there was a skeleton organization and financing for the KLA challenge, and the earlier anarchy in Albania provided access to weapons. All that was needed was manpower—the combination of the highest birth rate in Europe, a seventy percent Albanian unemployment rate, and forced repatriation by other European nations of some Albanians who had earlier fled the region provided that element.⁶⁸ The allied reaction to Drenica was rhetoric—the Albanian Kosovar reaction was a sort of *levée en masse*. By early summer, the KLA had swelled to several thousand with more joining each day. A reporter for *The New York Times*, claimed that the group’s nonnegotiable goals were independence and a “Greater Albania” and admitted the KLA were: “. . . poorly led, with no central command and little discipline.”⁶⁹ Over the next year, following Madeleine Albright’s lead, the United States would push the KLA toward greater cohesion and effectiveness.

While the KLA was burgeoning, Washington was still attempting to bring the two sides to the negotiating table. The “Hero of Dayton,” Richard Holbrooke, was dispatched to the region in early May, and ambassador to Macedonia, Chris Hill, was appointed as special envoy to negotiate directly with the parties. Hill (a 1994 Naval War College graduate) was a member of Holbrooke’s negotiating team at Dayton in 1995. Holbrooke and Hill faced the daunting challenge of finding a party to negotiate on the Kosovar Albanian side. Ibrahim Rugova, the pacifist, was certainly an attractive candidate, and Holbrooke succeeded in arranging a first-ever meeting between him and Milosevic in mid-May. Rugova understood that meeting with Milosevic might further weaken his rapidly eroding power base, and he agreed to the meeting only after Holbrooke promised that he would also arrange a meeting between Rugova and President Clinton.⁷⁰ Rugova got his meeting with Clinton on 29 May, where the president reportedly told his guest: “We will not allow another Bosnia to happen in Kosovo.”⁷¹ By the end of June, however, Washington came to the realization that Rugova’s credibility was waning, and the first direct talks with KLA leaders were conducted by Holbrooke in Kosovo and Gelbard in Switzerland.⁷²

In Brussels, NATO was determined, unlike Bosnia, to be involved in policy from the beginning of the crisis. The North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO’s political body, issued their first statement on 5 March 1998, and a series of partnership for peace (PfP) exercises were planned for Albania and Macedonia. In the wake of increased FRY action against the KLA in late-May/early-June, the defense ministers, meeting in Brussels on 11 June, directed an air exercise to be conducted over Albania and that military planning for “a full range of options” be undertaken. In July and August the NAC was briefed on the options developed by military planners. Planned military options (and anticipated required troops) included:

“A” Agreed ceasefire, with negotiations for a peace settlement to follow (50,000).

“A-” Enforcement of agreed peace settlement (28,000).

“B” NATO forced entry subjugating all of the FRY (200,000).

“B-” Forced entry into Kosovo only (75,000).⁷³

Consensus on conditions for the execution of the options was still far from assured. Throughout the summer, there was reportedly, “a furious internal debate,” over whether NATO could act without further specific U.N. authorization.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the situation in Kosovo continued to evolve.

On 16 June 1998, the day after NATO’s air exercise, Slobodan Milosevic traveled to Moscow to meet with Russia’s President Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin had no shortage of problems of his own at the time. The Russian economy was approaching “meltdown,” and by August, Russia would be forced to default on international loan payments. The substance of the discussions between the two is not known, but Milosevic returned from Moscow in what seemed to be a more cooperative mood. He expressed willingness to renew talks with moderate Kosovar Albanian factions and allow foreign diplomatic observers into Kosovo. FRY forces in Kosovo did seem to moderate their crackdown, and Milosevic reached agreement with Holbrooke on a Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission (KDOM) that began operations in early July.⁷⁵ As FRY forces eased their assaults, the KLA moved quickly to fill the void. From late-June to mid-July the KLA made remarkable gains and claimed to control 30-40 percent of Kosovo. This turnaround put a new face on the crisis and gave NATO and United States officials pause. By mid-July, NATO and United States officials made it clear that there would be no support for a rebel conquest of Kosovo. Secretary of Defense Cohen let it be known: “. . . we will not be the air force for the KLA.”⁷⁶

Later, some accused the administration of issuing a “green light” to Milosevic for his summer 1998 repression of the KLA. An anonymous Western diplomat told reporters that: “. . . the West tacitly accepted the Serb offensive and did nothing to stop it.”⁷⁷ Whether a “green light” was ever issued, the subsequent FRY offensive did spur the KLA toward greater unity. The increased cohesion of the KLA gave negotiators not only another party to engage, but also other demands to be dealt with.

While the Serbs were violently reasserting themselves in Kosovo, the two other big stories of 1998 were heating up, and a “pop-up crisis” was added to the mix. On 5 August, Saddam again announced he was suspending cooperation with U.N. arms inspectors. This action set in motion a series of threats and high-level diplomacy culminating with Operation Desert Fox in December.⁷⁸ The Lewinsky matter was also reaching a critical juncture. On 17 August, President Clinton went before the grand jury, and then the American public, to admit an “improper relationship” with Ms. Lewinsky.⁷⁹ Several weeks later, former Senator Robert Dole returned from a visit to Kosovo to a meeting with the president. Dole recalls that after a brief discussion on Kosovo with the president and NSA Berger, Berger left the room and then: “We discussed impeachment. . . This was a critical time in the Monica

events.”⁸⁰ If those issues weren't enough, United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed on 7 August, and the United States executed reprisal Tomahawk strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan on 20 August.⁸¹ By the time those tomahawks stopped falling, the West confronted a new dimension to the crisis in Kosovo.

The Serb summer offensive, begun in late July 1998, added another wrinkle to the Kosovo dilemma. By September 1998, approximately 300,000 Kosovar Albanians were forced from their homes, with at least 50,000 believed to be hiding in the forest with no shelter. The prospect of tens of thousands of Kosovars starving or freezing during the coming winter, in the words of one pundit, “concentrated the minds in Washington and elsewhere.”⁸² On 23 September, Russia finally agreed to another security council resolution (UNSCR 1199) calling on the FRY to: cease action against civilians; withdraw additional security forces; allow international monitoring, return of refugees, and unimpeded access by relief organizations; and continue a dialogue to reach a political solution to the crisis. Russian acceptance of the resolution was contingent on no mention of force to impose the U.N. demands.⁸³

The next day, NATO defense ministers meeting in Portugal acknowledged that NATO's credibility was on the line. NATO Secretary-General Solana told the group that an unnamed Serb diplomat had joked: “a village a day keeps NATO away.”⁸⁴ At the Portugal meeting, only the air options were seen as politically possible, and an “Activation Warning” (ACTWARN) was approved on 24 September 1998 for both limited air strikes and a phased air campaign. The ACTWARN allowed forces to be identified and detailed planning to continue, but it did not represent a decision to use force—the allies were still divided over the need for a specific U.N. mandate to take such a step.⁸⁵

Serbian forces in Kosovo were soon to provide another push on the road to war. On 26 September, reacting to continued KLA attacks in which a dozen Serb police were killed, Serbian forces slaughtered thirty-five civilians, including a seven-month pregnant woman whose stomach had been slit open. Twenty-one of the casualties were from the same family.⁸⁶ Richard Holbrooke happened to be in Washington and attended an NSC Principals Committee meeting on 30 September. He recalls the *New York Times* sitting in the middle of an oak table in the situation room like “a silent witness” to the tragedy.⁸⁷ Madeleine Albright argued strongly for air strikes at that meeting, but air strikes in October 1998 faced a number of obstacles.⁸⁸

First, the Monica issue was still on the front page, and congressional midterm elections were less than a month away. The Republicans were anticipating significant gains given the ongoing scandal. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott highlighted the political risk in a 4 October interview, arguing: “The Serbs have done what they wanted. Now they're pulling back and now . . . three weeks before an election, we're going to go in and bomb.” Both sides of the aisle in Congress saw the risk. Democratic Senator Joseph Biden who favored stronger action in Kosovo, was told by colleagues at a 6 October party caucus: “Don't count me in, Joe, don't count me in.”⁸⁹ Finally, there was the matter of allied consensus for forceful action. Russia announced in early October that it would veto any U.N. Security Council

resolution authorizing the use of force.⁹⁰ NATO was convinced that its credibility was on the line, but the legalities of threatening force without specific U.N. authorization were still a matter of contention.

On 5 October 1998, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported that the FRY was in breach of UNSCR 1199, and Richard Holbrooke was dispatched to Belgrade to confront Milosevic. Holbrooke's aim was to achieve at least a temporary halt to the bloodshed and some mechanism to provide enough confidence to allow the refugees to return to shelter before winter turned Kosovo into a humanitarian catastrophe. Initially Holbrooke made no progress, and he reported to Ms. Albright on 7 October: "This guy is not taking us seriously."⁹¹

Fortunately for Holbrooke, on 10 October, NATO Secretary-General Solana told the NAC that there was "sufficient legal basis" for threatening force even without further U.N. authorization. Solana purposely did not specify that "basis," since members disagreed exactly what the legal rationale should be, but were fundamentally agreed on the threat of force. NATO's agreement enabled Holbrooke to tell Milosevic that the allies were nearing consensus on force unless Milosevic would agree to withdrawal from Kosovo and also to a verification scheme. After delivering that message to Milosevic on 12 October, Holbrooke traveled to Brussels and told the NAC that he needed the formal threat of force to obtain agreement from Belgrade. The NAC obliged in the early morning hours of 13 October, approving an "Activation Order" (ACTORD) that would allow strikes to commence within ninety-six hours. Holbrooke flew back to Belgrade that morning, and just before noon emerged from a meeting with Milosevic announcing that an agreement had been reached.⁹² The ACTORD remained in place, and the U.N. Security Council passed UNSCR 1203 on 24 October, formally supporting the terms of the Holbrooke-Milosevic agreement.

By 27 October it seemed the crisis had been diffused, but even Holbrooke recognized the "October Agreement" was only an interim measure. He would later say: ". . . we predicted that if we didn't have a security force to enforce this, it would fall apart by the spring . . . It's a shame we didn't do it more aggressively, but that was not possible, given the mood of the congressional/executive branch dialogue on that week before I left in October."⁹³ The United States intelligence community agreed with Holbrooke's assessment. A November estimate concluded that: "Milosevic is susceptible to outside pressure . . . [but he would only accept a new status for Kosovo, if among other conditions, the West] threatened to use sustained and decisive military power against his forces." United States intelligence also warned that: "the KLA intended to draw NATO into its fight for independence by provoking Serb forces into further atrocities."⁹⁴

The "October Agreement" called for withdrawal of Serb security forces and established an Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM). The nearly 2,000 unarmed verifiers began to arrive in November, and NATO stationed a French-led 1,500-person "Extraction Force" (XFOR) in Macedonia in December, should the verifiers require armed assistance. The United States committed no ground troops to this effort, and throughout 1998 would not formally commit to ground troops, even in the event of agreement by both sides for a peace agreement.⁹⁵

December 1998 was a big month for Washington. The crisis with Iraq came to a head, with United States and British warplanes beginning four days of bombing on 17 December. Many would later point out that Milosevic must have noted the limited nature of these strikes. While the bombs were falling on Iraq, the House approved two articles of impeachment, and a Senate trial was set for January. Even Kosovo was beginning to heat up. The KLA was assumed responsible for the slaying of six Serbian youths at a cafe in Pec, Kosovo, on 14 December. Not long after, Serb forces began to redeploy into Kosovo in violation of the October Agreement and UNSCR 1203. Despite the existing NATO ACTORD, no retaliation was forthcoming. Any NATO strikes would have to consider the KVM verifiers on the ground, and as one administration official put it: "You're not going to get people to bomb over a specific number of [FRY] troops."⁹⁶ 1998 closed with the prospect that Kosovo would again be at the center of attention, at least by the spring thaw.

An NSC Principals meeting on Kosovo was held on 15 January 1999, and Albright again tried to make her case for stronger action against Milosevic. From the beginning of the crisis nearly a year before, she thought a solely diplomatic tact with Milosevic was bound to fail, but she realized that most in the administration agreed with Richard Holbrooke's belief that negotiations could lead to a reasonable solution. All year, she deferred to Holbrooke, realizing that he was supported by powerful voices at the White House and Pentagon. On the table at the 15 January meeting was a thirteen-page strategy paper on Kosovo recommending additional actions to build on and reinforce the October Agreement. Albright brought two pages of talking points to argue that more forceful action was needed—in her words, "decisive steps." While she did not outline specific military actions that might be part of these decisive steps, it was clear that she did not favor continuation of the status quo. Both SECDEF Cohen and NSA Berger were leery of her proposal, and in the end, reinforcing the October Agreement was the consensus recommended to the president. Albright was reportedly furious, exclaiming: "We're just gerbils running on a wheel," as she left the meeting.⁹⁷

Late in the afternoon of 15 January, the KVM received reports of fighting around the village of Racak. The next day, a team led by the KVM chief returned to Racak and found a scene that was described to reporters as a "crime against humanity" perpetuated by FRY security forces.⁹⁸ Ultimately the death toll was put at forty-five, including three women, a twelve year old boy, and several elderly men. Madeleine Albright heard the news at 4:30 a.m. when her alarm clock radio woke her with the morning news. She called NSA Berger and said: "Spring has come early to Kosovo."⁹⁹

Albright realized that she would have to act quickly before Racak faded from the attention of policy makers. One aide reportedly advised her: "Whatever threat of force you don't get in the next two weeks, you're never getting."¹⁰⁰ She set to work with her staff crafting a new strategy for Kosovo. At the heart of Albright's strategy was an ultimatum to be delivered to both Milosevic and the KLA for both parties to accept an interim agreement drafted by the allies. If they accepted, NATO would enforce a settlement with troops on the ground. If Milosevic balked, NATO would begin its air campaign.¹⁰¹

Albright unveiled her new strategy at a late-afternoon 19 January NSC Principals meeting, just prior to the president's "State of the Union" address. SECDEF Cohen reportedly argued that talk of ground troops was premature, but all participants soon agreed with the essentials of Albright's plan. The Principals agreed that a credible threat of force was necessary. Further, they agreed that all parties should be summoned to a meeting at which the core demands, decided by the Contact Group (ideally including Russia), would be nonnegotiable, including a NATO implementation force. NSA Berger took the new Principals' consensus to President Clinton the next day and he approved it. On 21 January, Clinton called British Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss the new strategy. Both agreed on the general approach, Blair cautioning that the plan had to reign in both the KLA and the Serbs.¹⁰² With United States and UK acceptance, Albright set about implementing the strategy with vigor.

Albright's first task was getting both Europe and Russia on board with the approach. The NATO allies insisted that: 1) the threat or use of force had to be tied to a political objective beyond simply punishing Milosevic; 2) just as Blair had cautioned Clinton, any plan would have to modify the behavior of both the Serbs and KLA; and 3) United States troops would have to be a part of any peace enforcement scheme.¹⁰³ Ambassador Chris Hill's draft plan for Kosovar political autonomy and disarming the KLA addressed only the first two concerns. As early as 26 January, NSA Berger said: "We would have to look at that [United States ground troops] under those circumstances in consultations with Congress. Obviously, we've had no decisions along those lines."¹⁰⁴ It was not until 13 February 1999, the day after the Senate acquitted the president, that Clinton acknowledged in his regular Saturday radio address that: "a little less than four thousand [United States troops]" might participate in Kosovo peacekeeping.¹⁰⁵ The Europeans understood the president's reluctance to commit publicly to forces earlier, and by late January, Albright seemed to have the Europeans on board and traveled to Moscow to work on the Russians.

On 26 January, Albright delivered her pitch to the Russian foreign minister. The Russians were firmly opposed to use of force against their traditional ally Serbia, but understood that an ultimatum to Milosevic might have the desired effect.¹⁰⁶ Expressing this understanding (if not agreement) was good enough for the secretary of state. She and the foreign minister issued a joint statement condemning Racak, calling on Milosovic to honor UNSCRs and prior agreements, and also demanding a stop to KLA provocations.¹⁰⁷ With the Russians at least acquiescing to her strategy, Albright let the other foreign ministers of the Contact Group countries know that she would *not* attend their scheduled 29 January 1999 meeting in London *unless* they would commit to supporting her ultimatum strategy. On 27 January, after receiving assurances of support from the other members, Albright announced she would attend the London meeting, signifying all was in place for a carefully orchestrated rollout of the new approach.¹⁰⁸

The "rollout" began when U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited the NAC on 28 January. Annan could obviously not sanction the use of force in the absence of Security Council authorization, but he made it clear where his true sympathies lay. He told the NAC:

“bloody wars of the last decade have left us with no illusions about the difficulty of halting internal conflicts . . . particularly against the wishes of the government of a sovereign state. But nor have they left us with any illusions about the need to use force when all other means have failed. We may be reaching that limit, once again, in the former Yugoslavia.”¹⁰⁹

The next day the Contact Group released a list of twenty-six nonnegotiable principles granting Kosovo considerable political autonomy, but under Serbian sovereignty, enforced by NATO troops on the ground in Kosovo, with final status of the province to be determined three years hence. The Contact Group summoned both sides to Rambouillet, France, by 6 February 1999. The belligerents would have one week to agree to a settlement, with a possible extension of a week if the Contact Group approved. Albright said after the meeting: “We have sent the parties an unmistakable message—get serious. Showing up is not going to be good enough.”¹¹⁰

The final element fell into place the following day. NATO Secretary-General Solana announced: “NATO has agreed in authorizing airstrikes against targets in Yugoslav territory . . . I will take this decision in the light of both parties’ compliance with demands that they begin negotiations in France by next Saturday . . .”¹¹¹ With the allies ready, the president met with the NSC on 1 February 1999 and told his advisers that he understood Kosovo was more important to Milosevic than Bosnia, and: “he may be sorely tempted to take the first round of airstrikes. I hope we don’t have to bomb, but we may need to.”¹¹²

Rambouillet might have gone differently if other players had shown up. Missing from the Serb side was Milosevic, and it soon became clear that the Serbs attending had neither the power nor expertise to conduct serious negotiations. Missing from the Kosovar side was Adem Demaci, the KLA’s principal political representative, who was boycotting the talks because the West would not support independence of Kosovo as a possible outcome. In something of a surprise, the Kosovar delegation selected twenty-nine year old Hashim Thaci, whose *nom de guerre* was “the snake,” as their head delegate, bypassing Rugova, the pacifist LDK leader. With little progress made in the first week, the deadline for the talks was extended to 20 February, and then again to 23 February.¹¹³

The main sticking point for the Serb delegation was the nonnegotiable requirement for foreign troops to enforce any settlement in Kosovo. One administration official told reporters at Rambouillet off-the-record: “We intentionally set the bar too high for the Serbs to comply. They need some bombing, and that’s what they’re going to get.”¹¹⁴ As negotiations wore on, there did seem to be some flexibility in the Serbian camp for the political provisions of the proposed accord, but the Serbs were adamant about no foreign troops on their soil. Ambassador Chris Hill was dispatched twice to Belgrade on 16 and 19 February to meet directly with Milosevic on the peace enforcement issue. He gained no concessions on the 16 February trip, and on the 19th Milosevic refused to even meet with him.¹¹⁵ The Kosovar Albanians seemed just as reluctant to accept a settlement. They objected to the draft provision that the KLA would have to disarm and demanded a referendum on Kosovo’s future at the end of the three-year interim period. The head of the Kosovar

delegation told one of his advisors: “You should realize that if I go back with something my people [don’t] want, I may get a bullet in the head.”¹¹⁶

On 20 February 1999, Albright arrived, black Stetson hat and all, hoping to move the talks through her personal intervention. She later told a friend that those three days were the worst of her career.¹¹⁷ At one point, she appeared at the door to the room of the Albanian delegation after midnight, and a delegate, believing she was the cleaning lady, told her: “Give us five minutes. And please go away.”¹¹⁸ On 21 February, she told reporters: “. . . if the talks crater because the Serbs do not say yes, we will have bombing. If the talks crater because the Albanians have not said yes, we will not be able to support them, and in fact, will have to cut off whatever help they’re getting from the outside.”¹¹⁹ Albright’s aides were frustrated; one told a reporter: “Here is the greatest nation on earth pleading with some nothing-balls to do something entirely in their own interest . . . and they defy us all the way.”¹²⁰ As the last extended deadline approached, a statement was prepared stating that the Albanian delegates had: “voted in favor of [the] agreement,” and “could sign the agreement in two weeks after consultations with the people of Kosovo, political and military institutions.”¹²¹ The conference was adjourned on this note and scheduled to reconvene on 15 March in Paris.

In the intervening weeks, Albright convinced both former-Senator Dole and billionaire George Soros to lobby the Kosovars to ensure they would sign the agreement, and on 12 March she received word that they would sign.¹²² That day was an especially good one for Albright for another reason. She officiated at the signing ceremony on 12 March that officially brought Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into NATO.¹²³ The treaty signing meant that all was now in place for the NATO 50th Anniversary Summit, scheduled for 22 April in Washington. NATO allies, still squabbling over what to do in the Balkans, would certainly spoil that long-anticipated party, but a triumphant celebration of NATO’s effectiveness, having coerced Milosevic into relinquishing Kosovo after a couple weeks of bombing, would make the event even more memorable. Madeleine could envision both of those possibilities, but she probably did not expect that the summit would become a council of war for an ongoing conflict.

The next day, Ms. Albright was in the Situation Room of the White House with the other NSC Principals when Ambassador Hill phoned in his assessment of the chances that Milosevic would cave in to the nearly complete threat of war. Hill said the chances were: “Zero point zero percent,” and one official recalls stunned silence in the room. Two days later, the CIA delivered a report that Milosevic was apparently massing forces to begin the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. CJCS Shelton followed this grim news with the Pentagon’s assessment that, at least in the short run, the air campaign would likely make the situation in Kosovo worse, and massive flows of refugees were to be expected.¹²⁴ This dire prediction did not come as a complete surprise to Albright. Earlier she had commissioned Morton Halperin, head of her policy planning staff, to prepare a list of possible adverse scenarios for Kosovo. Halperin came back with a five-page memo titled “Surprises” that included: 1) KLA would launch military operations; 2) Milosevic would put forth a false “peace

offensive;" 3) NATO would balk at the end of the initial air campaign; 4) Russia would vigorously oppose, perhaps even aid the FRY; and 5) a massive ethnic cleansing offensive would be undertaken by the FRY (termed "the hardest" of the possible "surprises").¹²⁵ By 13 March, however, the road to war was heading in only one direction.

The Serbs returned to Paris on 15 March apparently decided on war. They rejected many of the concessions they had agreed to during the earlier session and demanded changes to the initial "nonnegotiable" principles issued by the Contact Group. The Kosovars, as anticipated, signed the agreement on 18 March, and the Contact Group adjourned the conference, declaring: "We will immediately engage in consultations with our partners and allies to be ready to act. We will be in contact with the secretary-general of NATO."¹²⁶ Some critics later argued that the Rambouillet process had been a failure, and perhaps a more accomplished negotiator like Holbrooke might have been more successful (some of these stories were alleged to have come from Holbrooke himself).¹²⁷ Others described the "essence" of Rambouillet somewhat differently and perhaps closer to the mark: "For some in the Clinton administration, as indeed in key allied capitals like London, the purpose of Rambouillet was not so much to get a deal that few thought obtainable. Rather it was to create a consensus in Washington and among NATO allies that force would have to be used."¹²⁸

Two days later the OSCE withdrew the Kosovo Verification Mission and Serb forces began to pour into the province. Richard Holbrooke was dispatched to Belgrade on 22 March in a last-ditch effort to convince Milosevic to back down. Holbrooke described Milosevic in that meeting as resigned to his fate. Milosevic's response to Holbrooke's question if he understood what would happen when the United States diplomats left was simply: "Yes, you will bomb us."¹²⁹ Forty-eight hours later, bombs were falling on the FRY. Madeleine Albright went on *NewsHour* that evening and told Jim Lehrer: "I don't see this as a long-term operation. I think that this is something . . . that is achievable within a relatively short period of time. But . . . I'm not going to be pinned down on this."¹³⁰

Albright's boss was also on TV that night announcing the beginning of Operation Allied Force. In the address, the president stated that he did: "not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war." That phrase was inserted into the speech just before airing by NSA Berger. Berger would later assert that: "we would not have won the war without this sentence." He argued that allied consensus would have been damaged without such assurance and the ensuing congressional debate would have further weakened the coalition.¹³¹ Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, General Naumann, held a different view. After the war, he asserted: ". . . all those politicians who ruled out in public the use of ground forces made it easier for Milosevic to calculate his risk . . . and by this we prolonged the war."¹³²

The length of the war seemed a surprise to all the policy makers. The day the bombing stopped, Ms. Albright tried to put her earlier "relatively short period" statement in the context that seventy-eight days was, after all, relatively short.¹³³ One of the more comprehensive political analyses of the war, however, reported the widespread NATO prewar belief that Milosevic would probably give up after a few days, with a likely maximum duration of

the war as two to three weeks.¹³⁴ It seems probable that Milosevic was counting on this belief and reasoned that NATO would lose cohesion if he could simply hold on.

It is even possible that Milosevic saw the war as a “win-win” situation. The NATO bombs would provide a good cover for altering the ethnic balance in the province by force. Even if Milosevic lost control of some of Kosovo, the conflict could seem a victory so long as he retained the northeastern section comprised of the Trepca mines (estimated to be the most valuable asset in Serbia, worth \$5 billion), Kosovo Polje, and Grachanitsa Monastery. In this event, Milosevic would have rid himself of an insurgency problem without the (possibly fatal) political cost of turning it over without a fight. He might have achieved this result if he had moderated his zeal along the “ethnic realignment” dimension.

With nearly 800,000 refugees either internally displaced or in Macedonia and Albania, the character of the war changed. Even though many had warned Milosevic would step up his campaign against the KLA, an administration official admitted all had underestimated: “the velocity and ferocity of the campaign to shift the ethnic balance of Kosovo.”¹³⁵ Following the refugee exodus, United States public support for the air war jumped to sixty-one percent (from only forty-three percent in February), and there were even fifty-two percent who supported ground troops should the strikes not work.¹³⁶ Europeans were at least as enthusiastic for action as their United States counterparts.¹³⁷ With refugees in the hills of Kosovo or camps in Macedonia and Albania, NATO faced a situation where stopping the war short of victory could lead to humanitarian disaster and a wider Balkan War. At the NATO summit in April, the allies made what seemed to be the only possible decision—they would win no matter what.¹³⁸

“No matter what . . .” meant that an invasion began to be more seriously considered. SACEUR, General Wes Clark, was directed to update the plans that had been on the shelf since the previous summer, and he briefed President Clinton on the preliminary results during the president’s trip to Europe in early May. On 20 May, Clark brought the completed plans to Washington and briefed the president and his top advisors in the “Tank” in the Pentagon.¹³⁹ Clark’s plan, an upgrade of the “B-Plan” of August 1998, called for a “fail-proof” force of 175,000 troops, 100,000 from the United States. Clark reportedly did not minimize the dangers; there was discussion of fighting “ridge-to-ridge” and the likelihood of numerous casualties. Clark indicated that a decision would have to be made by early-to-mid-June if the force were to be deployed to be ready for combat by 1 September. By 2 June NSA Berger was having what he called: “the longest night of my time in this job.” Berger was drafting the final memo to be sent to the president recommending approval of Clark’s plan. Berger believed the president would approve it the next morning. Fortunately, early the next morning, the White House received word that Milosevic had accepted the deal offered through Russian Envoy Chernomyrdin and EU Envoy Ahtisaari. It would take another week to work out the details, but by 10 June, NATO Secretary-General Solana announced the suspension of Operation Allied Force.

The same day, a column of Russian troops left Bosnia headed for Kosovo. For several tense days, it appeared that Russia was attempting to establish a “Russian Sector” in

northeastern Kosovo. The Russian troops occupied Pristina airfield on 11 June, in advance of KFOR troops, and on 12 June a contingent of 2,500 Russian paratroopers was readied to fly into Pristina. The Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Romanian governments all denied overflight rights for the Russians. Following intense diplomatic discussions between United States and Russian officials, an agreement was reached on 18 June for Russians to be incorporated into KFOR, but without a specific Russian sector. By then, Kosovar refugees were already pouring back into the province, and it appeared NATO had won its first war.¹⁴⁰

It would seem that Allied Force should have been a great personal triumph for Madeleine Albright. While the war was still very much in doubt in April, any number of pundits asserted that her influence within the administration was waning.¹⁴¹ Particularly biting criticism came from a former colleague at Georgetown, Peter Krogh, who asserted: "I can recall no time in the past 30 years when American foreign policy was in worse shape, or in less competent hands."¹⁴² Even after the war, Washington watchers observed that Albright had been "eclipsed" by NSA Berger, and a year after the war, another asserted: "she wields less influence than any secretary of state since the Nixon administration . . ."¹⁴³ Whatever the truth about Albright's later influence within the Clinton administration, it is likely that her part in "Madeleine's War" had a substantial impact on it.

OPERATION ALLIED FORCE TIMELINE

28 Jun 1389	Serbian Prince Lazar is defeated at the Field of Blackbirds, ushering in 500 years of Ottoman domination of Serbia.	11 Oct 93	Harlan County turned away from docks at Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
1912	Serbia asserts control over Kosovo. Independent Albania created.	21 Nov 95	Participants initial Dayton peace accord.
1918	State of Yugoslavia created.	4 Nov 96	Clinton elected for second term.
1945	Josef Broz Tito assumes power of communist Yugoslav state.	23 Jan 97	Madeleine Albright sworn in as secretary of state.
4 May 80	President Tito dies.	Jan-Apr 97	Albanian pyramid investment scheme collapses; Albania descends into anarchy.
24 Apr 87	Slobodan Milosevic speech in Kosovo: "No one will dare to beat you again."	14 May 97	NATO-Russia Founding Act clears way for NATO enlargement.
Mar 89	New Serbian Constitution strips Kosovo of autonomy.	9 Jul 97	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic invited to join NATO.
2 Jul 91	Slovenia and Croatia declare independence; war ensues.	28 Nov 97	KLA appear in public in uniform at funeral.
15 Jan 92	EC recognizes Slovenia and Croatia.	13 Jan 98	Saddam Hussein refuses entry to U.N. inspection team.
3 Mar 92	Bosnia declares independence; fighting erupts.	21 Jan 98	Monica Lewinsky story breaks; president denies impropriety.
7 Apr 92	United States recognizes Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia.	23 Feb 98	Kofi Annan secures agreement with Tariq Aziz.
May 92	Ibrahim Rugova elected "president" of Kosovo.		Robert Gelbard says KLA is "terrorist group."
3 Nov 92	Bill Clinton wins United States election.	7 Mar 98	Albright: "not stand by and allow . . . what they can no longer do in Bosnia."
24 Dec 92	President Bush issues "Christmas warning" concerning Kosovo to Milosevic.	31 Mar 98	UNSCR 1160 imposes arms embargo on Belgrade.
Feb/Jul 93	Warren Christopher reiterates commitment to "Christmas warning."	30 Apr 98	Senate ratifies NATO enlargement.
May 93	First armed KLA attack kills two Serb police officers.	29 May 98	Rugova meets with President Clinton.
4 Oct 93	United States Rangers killed in Somalia firefight.	15 Jun 98	Operation Determined Falcon, "Balkan Air Show," exercise takes place.

23 Jul 98	Alleged "green light" to Milosevic to contain KLA advances.	31 Oct 98	Iraq halts all cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors.
Late Jul 98	Serb offensive begins to reverse rebel gains.	Nov 98	OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) begins deploying.
5 Aug 98	Iraq suspends cooperation with U.N. arms inspectors.	5 Nov 98	Congressional midterm elections—Democrats fare better than expected although Republicans retain control of both houses.
7 Aug 98	Bombing of United States Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.	17 Dec 98	Operation Desert Fox begins four days of air strikes against Iraq.
17 Aug 98	Clinton testifies before grand jury; admits to "inappropriate relationship" on TV.	19 Dec 98	House approves two articles of impeachment against President Clinton.
20 Aug 98	Cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan.	24 Dec 98	Serb forces begin to redeploy into Kosovo, escalating attacks against the KLA.
23 Sep 98	UNSCR 1199 demands Serb withdrawal, refugee return.	14 Jan 99	Senate impeachment trial begins.
24 Sep 98	NATO defense ministers give permission for Activation Warning (ACTWARN).	15 Jan 99	"Status Quo Plus" approved at NSC Principals Meeting.
26 Sep 98	35 civilians slain at/near Gornje Obrinje.		"Racak massacre" claims 45 Kosovar civilians.
5 Oct 98	U.N. Secretary-General Annan reports FRY violations of UNSCR 1199 and Richard Holbrooke travels to FRY.	19 Jan 99	Principals approve "Rambouillet Strategy" favored by Albright.
6 Oct 98	Russia says it will veto any U.N. authorization for force.	29 Jan 99	Contact Group meets in London, summons parties to Rambouillet.
8 Oct 98	House votes for impeachment inquiry.	6 Feb 99	Rambouillet peace talks begin.
10 Oct 98	Solana asserts there is "sufficient legal basis" for NATO to act.	12 Feb 99	Senate acquits president in impeachment trial.
13 Oct 98	NATO approves Activation Order (ACTORD). Holbrooke reaches "October Agreement" with Milosevic.	13 Feb 99	Clinton pledges up to 4,000 troops in event of cease-fire.
24 Oct 98	UNSCR 1203 endorses "October Agreement."	20 Feb 99	Albright arrives at Rambouillet in attempt to salvage talks.
27 Oct 98	Serbs begin withdrawal of forces from Kosovo.	23 Feb 99	KLA expresses intention to sign but must confer first.
		12 Mar 99	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic join NATO.
		15 Mar 99	Peace talks reconvene in Paris.
		18 Mar 99	Kosovar Albanians sign accords; Serbs refuse.

22 Mar 99	Last-ditch Holbrooke mission fails.	20 May 99	Clinton briefed on invasion plans: 170,000 total (100,000 U.S.) troops.
24 Mar 99	Operation Allied Force begins.		
27 Mar 99	F-117 shot down; pilot rescued.	27 May 99	NATO defense ministers meet in Bonn to discuss invasion.
1 Apr 99	Three United States Soldiers captured on Macedonia border.		
22 Apr 99	NATO 50 th Anniversary Summit begins.	2 Jun 99	Chernomyrdin and Ahtisaari present G-8 principles to Milosevic. Berger drafts invasion memo.
2 May 99	Jesse Jackson secures release of three United States POWs.	3 Jun 99	Milosevic accepts settlement principles.
5 May 99	Clinton briefed on ground plans in Brussels; first NATO deaths in non-combat helo accident.	10 Jun 99	NATO Secretary-General Solana suspends NATO bombing.
7 May 99	Chinese embassy bombed.	20 Jun 99	Serbs complete withdrawal; Solana formally ends bombing campaign.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA AND KOSOVO



Yugoslavia 1918-1992



Kosovo June 1999



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