# Interview: Carl Bildt, High Representative in BiH

For the past 17 months, former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt has served as point man in Bosnia for the Dayton peace accords, the U.S.- brokered agreement designed to end ethnic warfare among Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. His daunting task has been the implementation of the Dayton's hopeful objective – the restoration of normal civilian life, leading toward reconciliation among bitter adversaries. Bildt, 47, plans to return to Sweden, probably in mid-June, to re-enter politics. But he will be leaving Bosnia at a time when peace appears as fragile as ever. He spoke with Newsweek's Stacy Sullivan last week in Sarajevo. Excerpts:

**Sullivan:** Critics say that little has been done to solidify peace in Bosnia. Are you satisfied with what you've been able to accomplish ?

**Bildt:** Of course not everything has been implemented. But a lot has been happening. I think there a small miracles happening more or less every day in terms of contacts and meetings that were absolutely inconceivable only months ago. Still, the sum of these things do not as yet add up to a self-sustaining peace process. The international community has to stay actively committed to Bosnia to make this process work.

**Sullivan:** Were the Dayton accords realistic ? Wasn't it a bit unrealistic to expect that Serbs, who spent four years cleansing Muslims from their territory, would allow them to return ?

**Bildt:** Dayton, I often say, is the most ambitious peace agreement ever. After 44 months of war, to expect that in 17 months all of society would be healed, all of the wounds overcome and all of the reconstruction completed would of course be naive.

**Sullivan:** Although Dayton provided for that.

**Bildt:** No. Dayton had only one timetable, and that was a military one. There is a tendency to make civilian political and economic implementation subordinate to some kind of arbitrary military timetable. That is to invite disaster, because it can't be done. Look at any society that has gone through horrors of the sort this society has gone through, and look at the time it has taken to heal the wounds.

**Sullivan:** Doesn't it appear that both the international community and the parties themselves have reconciled themselves to partition ?

**Bildt:** Sometimes we in this office are seen as the last vanguards of the idea of a united Bosnia. Because the local parties themselves are acting in a way that is contrary to a united Bosnia.

**Sullivan:** If the parties in Bosnia were to say that they simply could not live together and wanted partition, would that be acceptable ?

**Bildt:** Partition would be an extremely dangerous and potentially bloody process. We have close to a quarter of a million Croats living in pockets in central Bosnia, but no compact Croat territory. Roughly as many Croats live in central Bosnia as in Herzegovina, so you would have a bloody separation between the Muslims and the Croats, and we can't be part of that. I don't think such a situation would be stable . I think (the Muslims) would risk being crushed between the Croats and the Serbs at some point in time.

**Sullivan:** The Bosnian government is said to be considering partition as an option.

**Bildt:** This is a very dangerous option. Because what they are also saying is that they want more land. More land in this part of Europe means war. There is no way in which the one or the other is going to give up chunks of territory that they now control without fighting, and fighting would bring more new enormous waves of refugees.

**Sullivan:** What's being done to build a Bosnian state ?

**Bildt:** The work we are doing is essentially that of creating the basic infrastructure for a common state. It includes a law on foreign trade, customs, foreign investment, a central bank, a state budget and citizenship and passport laws. None of this exists. It's the minimum, in my opinion, for a functioning common state.

**Sullivan:** Will this be adopted before you leave ?

**Bildt:** We have an agreement on 95 percent of it. We are in the process of state building where a state did not exist. I remember when we arrived here. Every meeting that took place was organized by our office in armoured cars with tanks around us. I was at a cocktail party yesterday in Sarajevo and everyone was there: representatives from Pale (the Serb headquarters) mingling with the internationals, with the Bosniaks and the Croats. This was simply unthinkable six months ago.

**Sullivan:** Radovan Karadzic has been indicted as a war criminal, yet he still runs things behind the scenes in the so-called Serb Republic. Why hasn't he been brought before the war crimes tribunal in The Hague ?

**Bildt:** There hasn't been the willingness of key governments to do what I consider necessary. I find it inconceivable that the military part of the peace mission will end with Karadzic still in the area and resurfacing as an open and public political personality in Republika Srpska. Then everything NATO has done here will be seen as a charade.

**Sullivan:** What will your successor have to do ?

**Bildt:** The key task will be to keep the international coalition intact. We can only be successful here if we maintain the peace coalition between the Americans, the Europeans and the Russians. No one can do it on their own.