ing dinner, then walked over to us. It was a beautiful June evening, and the White House exuded all its special magic. I looked at Christopher, concerned that we would lose the moment. The President joined us and broke the ice. "What about Bosnia?" he asked suddenly.

"I hate to ruin a wonderful evening, Mr. President," I began, "but we should clarify something that came up during the day. Under existing NATO plans, the United States is already committed to sending troops to Bosnia if the U.N. decides to withdraw. I'm afraid we may not have that much flexibility left."

The President looked at me with surprise. "What do you mean?" he asked. "I'll decide the troop issue if and when the time comes."

There was silence for a moment. "Mr. President," I said, "NATO has already approved the withdrawal plan. While you have the power to stop it, it has a high degree of automaticity built into it, especially since we have committed ourselves publicly to assisting NATO troops if the U.N. decides to withdraw."

The President looked at Christopher. "Is this true?" he said. "I suggest that we talk about it tomorrow," Christopher said. "We have a problem." Without another word, the President walked off, holding his wife's hand.

I hoped that the day with Chirac would mark a turning point in the internal debate. The President continued the discussion the next day on the flight to Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the annual G-7 Summit, which Canada was hosting. He began to press his advisors for better options; he understood how odd it would be to send troops to Bosnia to implement a failure.

In late June, Tony Lake convened several meetings to consider the problem. He did not invite me, but other participants kept me informed. Disturbed by this exclusion, I consulted Vernon Jordan, one of the wisest men in Washington and a close friend of the President. I had promised Kati I would leave the government within a year; now I told Jordan that I was considering departure before the end of the summer. If Bosnia policy was going to be formulated without my involvement, then there was little reason to stay. Jordan reacted strongly, telling me that I could not "abandon Clinton" at such a moment of crisis. Jordan then talked to various people in the Administration, including the President and Christopher, and the situation eased slightly.

Meanwhile, events in Bosnia were moving faster than the policy-review process in Washington. As the Administration deliberated, the Bosnian Serbs attacked. This time their action would go down in history.

Srebrenica. Emboldened by his successes in intimidating the U.N. peacekeepers, General Mladic now focused pressure on the three isolated Muslim

enclaves in eastern Bosnia—Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde—that had been completely surrounded by Serb forces since early in the war. They had been designated as "United Nations Safe Areas" by Security Council resolutions in 1993, but there was nothing safe about them. A small number of U.N. peacekeepers had been sent to each enclave, but they were bottled up, unable to relieve the siege conditions of the three towns. By the summer of 1995 all three towns were swollen with Muslim refugees from the surrounding areas. Mladic decided to eliminate the enclaves from the map in order to secure the entire eastern portion of Bosnia for the Serbs.

On July 6, 1995, Mladic's forces began shelling Srebrenica, allegedly in retaliation for forays into Serb territory by Bosnian Muslim forces based in the enclave. Three days later, the Serbs took thirty Dutch peacekeepers hostage. On July 10, they took the town, and the rest of the Dutch soldiers, about 370 people, became hostages. The next day Mladic entered Srebrenica and announced that he was "presenting this city to the Serbian people as a gift." He added, "Finally, after the rebellion of the Dahijas, the time has come to take revenge on the Turks in this region"—a reference to a Serb rebellion against the Ottomans that was brutally crushed in 1804. Mladic's identification of modern-day Bosnian Muslims with the Turks of 191 years earlier was revealing of his dangerously warped mind-set.

Over the next week, the biggest single mass murder in Europe since World War II took place, while the outside world did nothing to stop the tragedy. Mladic's forces killed thousands of Muslims, most of them in cold-blooded executions after the town had surrendered. Precise details of what was happening were not known at the time, but there was no question that something truly horrible was going on. By coincidence, I had an additional source beyond the official reporting to confirm our worst suspicions about Srebrenica. My younger son, Anthony, who was then twenty-five, showed up in Tuzla to assist the State Department in interviewing refugees. He had been working in a refugee camp in Thailand when Refugees International president Lionel Rosenblatt asked him to rush to Bosnia to help with the emergency. Anthony and Lionel arrived in central Bosnia in late July, just as the first desperate survivors from Srebrenica and Zepa reached the safety of the airfield outside Tuzla. They were soon joined by Assistant Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs John Shattuck.

With Anthony assisting, Shattuck interviewed shell-shocked survivors of Srebrenica—and heard the stories that were to horrify the world: how the Serbs, directed by General Mladic, had rounded up all the Muslims in the town and piled them onto buses; how most of the men were never seen again; how people were herded into a soccer field and killed in large numbers; how there were still men in the thousands trying to escape through the woods

toward Tuzla. Then Shattuck and Oakley returned to Washington to press the government to greater action. Anthony stayed in Tuzla, calling me regularly with vivid stories of the continuing drama. Several times, in his characteristically blunt and passionate style, Anthony yelled into the phone that Washington had to do something, that I should "get my ass in gear." In fact, I had spent long hours unsuccessfully trying to find a way to stop the tragedy in Srebrenica and Zepa. My recommendation—to use airpower against the Bosnian Serbs in other parts of the country, as well as Srebrenica—had been rejected by the Western European nations that had troops at risk in Bosnia, and by the Pentagon. On July 13, the same day the Serbs began killing Muslims systematically in the soccer stadium, Chirac called President Clinton. He said that something had to be done, and proposed that American helicopters carry French troops into Srebrenica to relieve the town. This proposal had already been discussed through official French channels, and run into fierce opposition not only from the British and the Pentagon, but from Chirac's own generals. It had no chance of acceptance.

There was no more energy left in the international system. Everywhere one turned, there was a sense of confusion in the face of Bosnian Serb brutality. The first line of resistance to any action was the Dutch government, which, after initially considering action, refused to allow air strikes until all its soldiers were out of Bosnia. Through every channel available, in London, Paris, and NATO headquarters, we pressed for some response. It was useless. For a week I called our Ambassador in the Netherlands, Terry Dornbush, asking him to press the Dutch to allow air strikes, but to no avail. The other Europeans had reached their limits; with their own soldiers also at risk, they were not going to agree to any action that endangered the Dutch. (The British would pull their forces out of Gorazde within weeks.) The Serbs knew this, and held the bulk of the Dutch forces captive in the U.N. compound at the nearby village of Potocari until they had finished their dirty work at Srebrenica. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the death toll of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica between July 12 and July 16, 1995, was 7,079. Most of the victims were unarmed, and most died in ambushes and mass executions. For sheer intensity, nothing in the war had matched, or ever would match, Srebrenica. The name would become part of the language of the horrors of modern war, alongside Lidice, Oradour, Babi Yar, and the Katyn Forest.

The London Conference. The destruction of Srebrenica was an enormous shock to the Western alliance. But there was more in that terrible month. On July 19, emboldened by the events in eastern Bosnia, the Krajina Serbs attacked the Muslim enclave in the farthest corner of northwestern Bosnia, the Bihac pocket. Bihac, an agricultural area jutting deep into Croatia, had been

cut off from Sarajevo throughout the war, but it was less than an hour by car from Zagreb, and its fall would have changed the balance in Croatia and made Croatian recapture of the Krajina much more difficult.

The war was escalating dangerously. In the east, the last two enclaves, Zepa and Gorazde, lay open to Mladic's rampaging forces. In the far northwest, Bihac seemed about to be cut in half. Tudjman was preparing to reopen the war in the Krajina, despite the agreement he had reached with Vice President Gore and me in March. Sarajevo was under renewed attack. Washington was still uncertain about what to do next. After judging Srebrenica the "worst humiliation for the Western democracies since the 1930s," Speaker Gingrich offered an unhelpful view. "There are twenty ways to solve this problem without involving a single American directly in this thing," he said. I agreed with his assessment of Srebrenica, but could not imagine any of the "twenty ways" that Gingrich said he had in mind.

Chirac complained publicly that France was "alone," and added, "We can't imagine that the U.N. force will remain only to observe, and to be, in a way, accomplices in the situation. If that is the case, it is better to withdraw." Chirac did not mention, of course, that the U.N. forces were commanded by a French general. Prime Minister John Major publicly rejected Chirac's continued proposals to relieve Srebrenica and reinforce Gorazde. Instead, Major unexpectedly proposed an international "crisis meeting" that he would chair in London on July 21.

Washington reacted with a flurry of activity. General Shalikashvili rushed to Europe to meet his NATO counterparts, and then joined Christopher and Perry in London for Major's conference. To my great frustration, I could not attend the London meeting because of a serious ear infection. Grounded by the chief State Department medical officer, I watched from Washington as Christopher and Perry struggled to give the U.N. force in Bosnia greater authority—indeed, to head off a U.N. withdrawal.

The London conference was one of those remarkable events in which something unexpectedly positive emerges from an initially unpromising idea. The British did not have a clear goal for the conference, nor did the United States when Christopher and Perry accepted the invitation. But in that dreadful month of July 1995, when the situation in Bosnia was at its low ebb, the very act of bringing together all the Foreign and Defense Ministers of NATO, as well as the Russians, produced its own result, which was to play an important role in the eleventh-hour revival of NATO.

The conclusions of the London conference were not drafted until Christopher was airborne. But by the time he landed in London, his team—Chief of Staff Tom Donilon, John Kornblum, Bob Frasure, and Policy Planning Director Jim Steinberg—had produced a document that proposed two important policy changes:

- First, NATO would draw "a line in the sand"—the evocation of President Bush's 1990–91 language on Iraq was deliberate—around the enclave of Gorazde.
- Second, the decision as to whether or not to use airpower, and how much, at Gorazde, would be made by NATO only, thus removing the U.N. from its dreadful "dual key" authority in regard to Gorazde—but not other parts of Bosnia.*

But in London, Christopher found initial reluctance on the part of the Europeans to such measures. In two private meetings with Prime Minister Major, he took a tough line. He found a partial ally in the new Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, and the new Defense Minister, Michael Portillo, who overruled their subordinates and accepted Christopher's draft. Because it identified a place where NATO would finally make a stand, London was an important benchmark, a sort of bottoming out at the last possible moment. Bill Perry later put a framed photograph of himself, Christopher, and Shalikashvili taken during the conference in a place of honor in his office, and labeled it "Turning Point." But that could not be foreseen at the time. The results in London were understandably greeted with skepticism by a world just beginning to learn what had happened in Srebrenica and familiar with earlier Western assertions of resolve that had evaporated before the cruelty of the Bosnian Serbs.

London did not go as far as many, including myself, wanted. For one thing, it doomed Zepa, now directly in the path of the Bosnian Serb Army. In addition, neither Sarajevo nor Bihac was yet covered by the new tough language. (This was partially corrected by General Joulwan and our Ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, who, in a tumultuous all-night session a few days later, forced the NATO Council to broaden the terms of engagement to include Sarajevo.)

The Croatian Offensive. In early August, the Croatians launched a major offensive to retake the Krajina. It was a dramatic gamble by President Tudjman. When it finally took place—still against our advice—the offensive was a complete success. The Krajina Serbs unexpectedly gave up their "capital," Knin, without a fight. President Tudjman had won his bet: contrary to American and British predictions, Milosevic had not come to the aid of the Krajina Serbs. For the first time in four years, the Serbs had suffered a military setback.

The Croatian offensive proved to be a wedge issue that divided not only Americans and Europeans, but the top echelons of the American government

* "Dual key" was a system that required both the U.N. and NATO to "turn the key" to authorize NATO air strikes. In practice, the "dual key" was a "dual veto," used by the U.N. to prevent or minimize NATO action.

itself. Most officials saw these military thrusts as simply another chapter in the dreary story of fighting and bloodshed in the region. They felt that the duty of our diplomacy was to put a stop to the fighting, regardless of what was happening on the ground. For me, however, the success of the Croatian (and later the Bosnian-Croat Federation) offensive was a classic illustration of a fundamental fact: the shape of the diplomatic landscape will usually reflect the actual balance of forces on the ground. In concrete terms, this meant that as diplomats we could not expect the Serbs to be conciliatory at the negotiating table as long as they had experienced nothing but success on the battlefield.

Zagreb's almost uncontested victory began to change the balance of power in the region. And the abandonment of the Croatian Serbs by Milosevic eliminated one of our greatest fears—that Belgrade would re-enter the war.

Joe Kruzel reflected the general view of our team in his last message to Washington, sent the night before he died. "For the first time," he wrote, "I realize how much the Croatian offensive in the Krajina has profoundly changed the nature of the Balkan game and thus our diplomatic offensive."

Bob Frasure had also shared this view. At our lunch with President Tudjman in Zagreb on August 17, two days before the Mount Igman tragedy, one member of our team tried to persuade Tudjman that he should halt the offensive immediately, as Washington wanted. Frasure passed me a note written on his place card, which I saved and later gave to his wife, Katharina—it was the last note I ever got from him:

> Dick: We "hired" these guys to be our junkyard dogs because we were desperate. We need to try to "control" them. But this is no time to get squeamish about things. This is the first time the Serb wave has been reversed. That is essential for us to get stability, so we can get out.

This view was not accepted by most of our Washington colleagues, especially the military and the CIA, which still feared, and predicted, a military response from the regular Yugoslav Army. The true importance of the Croatian offensive was thus not taken into account during the policy review that occurred in Washington in early August, well before our shuttle began so tragically.

The Policy Review and the Seven-Point Initiative. In early August, the President chaired three meetings in three days on Bosnia. Christopher was in Asia, and I was traveling in the western states with Kati. Tarnoff and Talbott represented the State Department and kept me closely informed. Finally, the President decided on a two-stage strategy: First, Lake and Tarnoff would go to

seven European nations, including Russia, as presidential emissaries, and present a framework for peace. Then I would begin a last-ditch, all-out negotiating effort.

The Lake-Tarnoff presentation was produced through the usual interagency drafting process. My absence from Washington was later to result in a flurry of press speculation that I had been cut out, but in fact I'd deliberately remained at a distance, not only because of my family commitments but because participating might have reduced my negotiating flexibility later.

The final product contained seven points, ranging from the general to the specific. It called for (1) a "comprehensive peace settlement"; (2) three-way recognition among Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); (3) the full lifting of all economic sanctions against Yugoslavia if a settlement was reached, and an American-backed program to equip and train the Croat-Muslim Federation forces if there was a settlement; (4) the peaceful return to Croatia of eastern Slavonia—the tiny, oil-rich sliver of Croatian land on the Serbian border that had been seized by the Serbs; (5) an all-out effort to pursue a cease-fire or an end to all offensive operations; (6) a reaffirmation of support for the so-called Contact Group plan agreed to in June 1994 by the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia—dividing Bosnia into two entities, 49 percent of the land going to the Bosnian Serbs, 51 percent to the Croat-Muslim Federation; and (7) a comprehensive program for regional economic reconstruction.

By sending his National Security Advisor, the President, who had been criticized for excessive detachment from Bosnia policy, was saying: this is it—the real, and perhaps last, American push for peace. I had little difficulty with the broad outlines of the initiative, but several specific aspects of the proposals troubled me. I decided to hold off on making my views known until after the completion of Lake's trip to Europe.

The "Handoff." Strobe and Peter had warned me to be prepared to cut my trip short, and on Saturday, August 12, after only a few days in Colorado, I returned to Washington, repacked my bags, and left for London, where Lake and his team were waiting. On August 14, I arrived in London for a "handoff" meeting in the American Embassy. For the first hour we met alone.

The meeting was quietly emotional. Tony and I had been linked by close personal and professional ties through five Administrations. "This is the kind of thing we dreamed of doing together thirty years ago when we started out in Vietnam," Tony began in a low, intense voice. "I'm going to be with you all the way. And if this thing fails, it's my ass more than yours."

Tony briefed me on his talks with the allies and the Russians, which had gone well. They were pleased that the President was engaged so deeply. I told

him that the framework he had proposed in his tour of Europe was fine, with an important exception: I could support neither his proposal to give the Serbs a wider corridor of land at Posavina nor the suggestion that we abandon Gorazde. Both of these ideas had been part of an attempt to create "more viable borders" for the Federation by trading Muslim enclaves for Serb concessions elsewhere. The Pentagon insisted it would not defend enclaves and slivers of land if called upon later to implement a peace agreement. Nonetheless, I told Tony that the United States could not be party to such a proposal. "This would create another forty thousand or more refugees," I said, "and we cannot be a party to that, especially after Srebrenica." Tony asked if it was not true that Izetbegovic had once told me he knew that all three eastern enclaves were not viable and would have to be given up. Izetbegovic had, in fact, made such a statement to me in Sarajevo in January, but that was long before the loss and horrors of Srebrenica and Zepa. "A trade is no longer possible," I said. "After Srebrenica, we cannot propose such a thing."

After a larger meeting with the rest of our team and a call on several senior British officials, we shook hands warmly and parted, Tony and Sandy Vershbow heading west and home to Washington. Our team—General Clark, Rosemarie Pauli, Bob Frasure, Joe Kruzel, and Nelson Drew—flew to the Balkans to begin the negotiations that we hoped would end the war.