

CHAPTER 6

Pale's Challenge

(August 22–28)

The inscrutability of history remains the salvation of human freedom and of human responsibility. The failure of prediction permits us to act as if our choices make a difference. For no one can prove that they don't, and there is no other way that we can vindicate human dignity and contrive a moral existence.

—ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.¹

AT 10:00 A.M. ON AUGUST 22, the day after our return from Sarajevo, Secretary Christopher convened his senior team to discuss Bosnia. As usual, we met in his working office, a small room directly behind his large, formal office on the seventh floor. When I first visited the State Department during a spring break from college in 1961—a trip that inspired me to join the Foreign Service the following year—Dean Rusk had used the large room as his office. But most recent secretaries of state preferred the more intimate surroundings of the back office, and Christopher used the ornate larger room almost entirely for formal meetings with foreign officials.

Although the State Department's unique bureaucratic culture has survived every one of its leaders (and defeated some), the personal style of each secretary deeply affects the way the Department reacts to events. Warren Christopher's style was methodical and cautious. He was, as the press often said, a lawyer's lawyer. He rarely talked about himself, but once offered a revealing comment to a journalist about his style: "I always thought that I would do things in a conservative way to maximize the progressiveness of my policy positions. . . . If you are courteous and prudent, you can advance causes and advance ideas that would be unacceptable for others."² Highly successful in his Los Angeles legal practice, he went to Washington in 1977 as Deputy Secretary of State to Cyrus Vance, and carried out a number of key assignments, most famously the complex negotiations over the release of the fifty-two American hostages in Tehran at the end of the Carter Administra-

tion. Unfailingly polite, adept at concealing any annoyance or impatience that he might be feeling, Christopher preferred to let others take the lead in recommending a course of action, while he focused on the risks it entailed. As a result, those advising him often divided into two groups: advocates of action, and "doubting Thomases" who argued the dangers of the proposed policy.

Christopher formed his positions only after careful deliberations, which included not only the substantive officials responsible for the issue, but a core group of trusted senior aides who sat in on almost every discussion. He would listen quietly, ask a few clarifying questions, more in the style of a judge than an advocate, and generally withhold his views until the end of the discussion. When he took a strong stand on an issue, he carried great weight within the government.

That morning, August 22, Christopher's core team crowded into the meeting. Peter Tarnoff, Chief of Staff Tom Donilon, and Director of Policy Planning James Steinberg squeezed side by side on the sofa; others, including Strobe Talbott, Wendy Sherman, who held the critical position of Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, and my senior deputy, John Kornblum, took seats on the chairs scattered around the small room. Latecomers sat on a narrow bench under a window that overlooked the Potomac and the Lincoln Memorial. Christopher sat, as always, behind his desk in the corner, sometimes leaning back against the bookcases, but usually taking careful notes on a legal pad. I sat in the chair closest to Christopher's desk, which was by custom saved for the primary action officer in the meeting.

The mood was understandably subdued. Our first need was to assemble a new team. I said that Christopher Hill, the brilliant, fearless, and argumentative country director for the Balkans, was ready to take the place of his good friend Bob Frasure, as we had planned before the accident. We left the designation of the NSC and Defense representatives to Lake and Perry.

Christopher noted that we lacked the legal expertise that would be essential if the negotiations got serious. He suggested adding to the team Roberts Owen, a distinguished Washington lawyer. Bob Owen, whom I had known since he had served as the Legal Advisor to the State Department during the Carter Administration, was calm, witty, and always cheerfully ready for the most demanding tasks, though he was almost seventy. Everyone marveled at his eternal youthfulness; he looked at least ten years younger than his age. Christopher's inspired idea gave our team something it was to need continually: an experienced and wise international lawyer.

Our meeting broke up quickly, and we left for the Fort Myer Memorial Chapel at Arlington National Cemetery to begin the painful ceremonies that

would remain engraved on our consciousness for the rest of the Bosnian peace mission.

The wives of all three men had chosen Arlington for the final resting place of their husbands. The first of the services was for Bob Frasure. Even though all were painful, Bob's funeral was made particularly heart-wrenching by the eloquent yet unreachable anguish of his sixteen-year-old daughter, Sarah.

"One question I will always ask myself is 'Why?' " she said, speaking, in a voice breaking with pain, from the altar above her father's casket. "I took him for granted. I never told him how much I loved him, and I never showed him how much I cared about him. Now I will never wake to hear him making pancakes on a Sunday morning."

The mourners in the chapel could hardly breathe. We filed out in silence broken only by the sounds of soft crying, and slowly followed Bob's casket to a grave site high on the hill above Washington, where, in an eerie and disquieting hush, it was blessed by a priest. I placed a flower on top of Bob's casket, said good-bye, and turned back toward Washington for another meeting.

The Principals' Committee began its meeting an hour after we had left Arlington on August 22. These meetings—somewhat misleadingly named because the real principals, the President and Vice President, rarely attended them—were supposed to be the primary decision-making forum in the Executive Branch. In theory, the views of senior officials, including any disagreements, were then brought to the President for final policy decisions. In fact, if a clear consensus was not reached at these meetings, the decision-making process would often come to a temporary halt, which was followed by a slow, laborious process of telephoning and private deal making. People hated to take their disagreements to the President; it was as though a failure to agree somehow reflected badly on each of them, and consensus, rather than clarity, was often the highest goal of the process.

During my first ten months as Assistant Secretary, most high-level meetings on Bosnia had a dispirited, inconclusive quality that often left Bob Frasure and me depressed and frustrated. Although no one could ignore the crisis, there was little enthusiasm for any proposal of action, no matter what it was. The result was often inaction or half-measures instead of a clear strategy.

This was not the case, however, immediately following the tragedy. The loss of three friends infused our meetings with a somber sense that there was no turning back. In addition, the President was now imparting to everyone his own sense of urgency. Not for the first time, I observed the value of—indeed, the necessity for—direct, personal presidential involvement to overcome bu-

reaucratic stalemates or inertia and give policy direction and strategic purpose.

We met in the Situation Room, the windowless basement room in the West Wing of the White House that has been the scene of so many historic crisis meetings over the last thirty years. First-time visitors were usually surprised at how unimpressive the room was. Movies always made the room seem larger and fancier, but the real thing was small, with low ceilings, three plain wood-paneled walls, and the fourth partially covered with a dreadful gray curtain. The end wall held clocks showing the time in various parts of the world, and above another wall floated a television screen, through which officials could participate on a secure U.S. government network. The table was small, with seats for only about ten people.

As chairman of the Principals' Committee, Tony Lake sat at the head of the table, with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense flanking him. The rest of the principals arrayed themselves along the table according to rank, and second-tier personnel took seats along the walls. The room was usually overcrowded, giving a physical sense of intimacy rarely reflected in the tone of the meetings themselves. When she could not get to Washington from New York for the meeting, Ambassador Albright hovered above us on the television screen, a disembodied but effective participant. She told me once that when she attended the meeting by television she had the sense of observing and participating simultaneously, thus affording her a degree of detachment that made her comments seem more perspicacious and convincing.

Completing the Team. Tony ran through a review of the issues in preparation for the next day, when the President planned to meet with us after a special memorial service at Arlington. As we broke up, Tony pulled me aside and said he wanted to assign Brigadier General Donald Kerrick to our team as Nelson Drew's replacement. Kerrick, whom I knew slightly, seemed an excellent choice.

We now lacked only a new civilian Defense Department representative. Perry said he was thinking of letting General Clark represent both the civilian and the uniformed sides of the Pentagon. I disagreed, saying it was vital to have a representative of the civilian side of the Defense Department in whom the Secretary had personal confidence.

In pressing this seemingly minor point, I was influenced by my experience as a junior member of the American negotiating team that met with the North Vietnamese in Paris in 1968-69. Despite an extraordinary delegation—Averell Harriman as leader, Cyrus Vance as his co-head, and Philip C. Habib, the outstanding career Foreign Service officer of his generation, as number

three—the team in Paris never had full backing from Washington. The military representatives on the negotiating team fought with Harriman and Vance, and sent frequent “back-channel” messages to the Pentagon that undermined the negotiators. Although Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford and Deputy Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach supported Harriman and Vance, they were mistrusted by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, National Security Advisor Walt Rostow, and our Ambassador in Saigon, Ellsworth Bunker.

Watching that episode in Paris as a twenty-seven-year-old junior Foreign Service officer had been unforgettable, but not enjoyable; I had seen Governor Harriman, a historic figure who had negotiated directly with Stalin and Churchill, reduced to fury and frustration by what he considered the excessive detail of his instructions from Washington, and by internal intrigues with the military and with Bunker. No other experience was more important to me in preparing for the Bosnian mission; I would not tolerate any similar internal divisions within our team, and the negotiating flexibility we needed could come only with the full backing of all the key members of the Principals’ Committee.

Perry, himself a veteran of the Vietnam era at the Pentagon, was sympathetic to my concern and chose James Pardew, who as director of the Balkan Task Force at the Pentagon had been Joe Kruzel’s closest aide on Bosnia. I did not know Pardew, a retired Army officer, but said we would be delighted with anyone in whom the Secretary of Defense had confidence.

So our seven-person core team was set: myself, General Wes Clark, Bob Owen, Chris Hill, General Don Kerrick, Jim Pardew, and Rosemarie Pauli. It would remain unchanged through the next six months, although many other people became vital parts of the effort as we gathered momentum—and the support of Washington was at all times critical. As I was soon to discover under conditions of the highest stress, I could not have wished for a stronger team to replace our fallen colleagues.

The Europeans. The next day, August 23, Peter Tarnoff and I met in the Secretary’s Conference Room with representatives of the European nations who had come to Washington to pay tribute to our three comrades.

Dealing with the Europeans was delicate and nettlesome throughout the Bosnia crisis, and put an unprecedented strain on NATO and the Atlantic Alliance just when the Cold War ties that had held us together had also disappeared. Our steadfast allies, who had looked to the United States for leadership during the Cold War, were ambivalent about the American role in post-Cold War Europe, and especially Bosnia. They had long called for greater American involvement but at the same time, they feared that they would be publicly humiliated if the United States took the lead. Our col-

leagues in the Contact Group—France, Germany, Great Britain, and Russia—were disturbed that we planned to negotiate first and consult them later, reversing the previous procedure, in which the five nations tried to work out a common position *before* taking it to the parties in the Balkans—a system that was cumbersome and unworkable.

Alain Dejammet, Political Director at the French Foreign Ministry, mentioned that Izetbegovic would be visiting Paris early the next week, and proposed a Contact Group meeting at that time. The French could be famously difficult, but among the Europeans they now had the strongest, most assertive foreign policy. They had paid for their involvement in Bosnia with the heaviest casualty toll, over fifty killed. We needed French support to succeed, and I was convinced we could handle any problems that might arise if we met in Paris. If we meant our high-minded rhetoric about partnership, we had to find ways to work with the French. So, despite the aversion of some American officials to any event held in France, I agreed immediately to Dejammet's suggestion.

Keeping the Atlantic Alliance, the main pillar of American foreign policy for over half a century, from coming apart over Bosnia was one of our greatest policy challenges. After a year as Ambassador to Germany, I was especially committed to repairing the strains that Bosnia had caused. We needed to work in partnership with the Alliance on a large number of other issues—the enlargement of NATO, a common policy toward the former Soviet Union, the Mideast, and Iran, terrorism, human rights, the environment, and organized crime—but Bosnia had begun to adversely affect everything. I addressed this problem in a blunt personal note to Christopher on August 23:

The Contact Group presents us with a constant conundrum. We can't live without it, we can't live with it. If we don't meet with them and tell them what we are doing, they complain publicly. If we tell them, they disagree and often leak—and worse.

In the end, we must keep the Contact Group together, especially since we will need it later to endorse and legitimize any agreement. . . . On August 20, [one member of the Contact Group] told me in confidence that [his government] now believes that "at least one member" of the Contact Group is passing details of the Contact Group meetings directly to Belgrade. . . .*

Any temporary Euro-annoyance with less information can be managed. It must be outweighed by our need for speed and security. . . . But we must never forget that we will need them *all* if there is ever a settlement—the E.U. for economic assistance, our NATO allies for the new post-U.N. peacekeeping force, the U.N. for legitimizing resolutions, the Islamic Conference for additional aid, and the Russians and Greeks for their influence (however limited) on Belgrade.

* This was a reference to Russia.

The Memorial Service. Our edgy meeting with the Europeans provided a sharp reminder of the unsentimental world to which we would soon return. But first there were more sad ceremonies at the Fort Myer Memorial Chapel. The next was a service in honor of all three men. There would be only one speaker: the President.

Any gathering with a President, even a tragic one, has a distinctive quality. The Fort Myer chapel was now infused with a combination of mourning and anticipation. Numerous security personnel, seemingly oblivious to the purpose for which we were gathered, added to the strange feeling, so different from the previous day's despair.

Four hundred people crowded into the nondenominational chapel. The President awarded each man the President's Citizen Medal, and then met privately with their families. He was masterful in such meetings, and afterward Katharina Frasure told me that he had comforted them and shared their loss in a very personal way.

Emerging from the chapel, the President spoke directly and movingly to the widows and children, saying the three men had "made reason their weapon, freedom their cause, and peace their goal." Praising them as "quiet American heroes," the President said that "Bob, Joe, and Nelson were in Bosnia because they were moved by the terrible injustice and suffering there."

When the President finished speaking, the audience stood in total silence as he came down from the podium and went up to the families, briefly holding hands with each of the three wives and six children. Then his senior advisors and the negotiating team followed him down a narrow corridor and into a small room with white cinder-block walls and shelves of inspirational books.

The meeting at Fort Myer proved to be an important benchmark. Although scheduled almost as an afterthought to the memorial service, this casual, quietly emotional meeting with the President was exactly what the Administration needed to restart the process and pull itself back together.

Pulling up chairs haphazardly, we gathered in a circle. The formality of meetings in the White House, with every seat carefully assigned by rank, was abandoned. Some people, having crowded into the room only to find that there were no more seats, stood against the walls.

The President asked me to review the status of each of the seven points Lake and Tarnoff had presented on their European trip two weeks earlier. We moved quickly past the more general points to focus on several more problematic issues.

Lake had told the Western Europeans that we "would pursue cease-fires or an end to offensive operations on the ground." This was, of course, contrary to

the emerging view of the negotiating team, which I explained: the Croatian offensive, while brutal (as is all war), was valuable to the negotiating process. The time would come when a cease-fire was desirable, but right now the trend on the battlefield was, for the first time, unfavorable to the Serbs. Unless given specific instructions to the contrary, I said, we would not seek a cease-fire yet. To my relief, no one took issue with this.

Lake had also said that the United States was ready to update the Contact Group map to "incorporate more viable borders and distribution of territory," consider proposals to widen the Posavina Corridor, and provide the Serbs "de jure control over the eastern enclaves" in return for the Bosnians and Bosnian Croats receiving more area around Sarajevo and other territory in central and western Bosnia that would create a more compact and coherent Federation territory. Finally, Lake had told our European allies that because the beleaguered enclave of Gorazde would be difficult to defend and would add to the difficulty of peace-plan implementation, we would seek to steer both parties toward solutions that would "trade Gorazde for other substantial Serb concessions." I had already told Lake, in London, that I would not support this, but my position was still unknown in Washington.

I outlined why we should not press Sarajevo to trade away Gorazde or recommend a widening of the Posavina Corridor. The Bosnian government would never voluntarily give up Gorazde following the massacres at Srebrenica and Zepa, nor should we put ourselves in the position of advocating the creation of tens of thousands of new refugees. The Pentagon representatives in the room, who had previously been adamant on this point, said nothing. Breathing another sigh of relief, I quickly moved on.

Finally, we came to the last point in Lake's original presentation, the comprehensive program for regional economic reconstruction. This provoked the first real discussion of the meeting, one that we would often remember later.

The issue went far beyond Bosnia. Everyone in Washington recognized the sea change that had come over congressional attitudes toward foreign assistance. Traditionally hostile to foreign aid, Congress had been especially brutal since control of both houses had passed to the Republicans seven months earlier.

A huge economic reconstruction program was essential to any Bosnia settlement. Some people treated this as little more than rhetoric, but lasting peace in the region required rebuilding the interdependent economy that, until four years earlier, had existed in a single Yugoslavia, with a single economic infrastructure—railroads, highways, industry, etc. This would require not just rhetoric, but significant American leadership and resources.

However, because of the congressional repercussions of any new budgetary obligations, Lake and Tarnoff had not been allowed to indicate the size of

America's eventual contribution to a civilian reconstruction effort in Bosnia. Our obvious inconsistency on this issue was troubling. On the one hand, the United States wanted to remain the world's leading power; on the other, the Administration was reluctant to ask Congress for the resources to ensure that leadership—and Congress was even more parsimonious. This was wrong; even in an era of budget constraints and huge deficits, the nation could afford expenditures it considered vital to its national interests.

I suggested that an appropriate amount for the first year might be \$500 million. My comments provoked a stirring among some of my colleagues. Perry said that an even higher figure—perhaps \$1 billion for the first year—would be appropriate.

"If we can get peace, we should be prepared to put up a billion dollars," the President said emphatically.

Cautionary notes from several sides of the room came from people who had been bruised in budget battles with the new Congress. One person warned that since we were having difficulty getting "even \$10 million for Ecuador," huge sums for Bosnia would be virtually impossible. The President turned to the White House Chief of Staff, Leon Panetta, a former Director of the Office of Management and Budget, who outlined the immense problem any supplemental request would confront. Panetta saw—and accurately predicted—the extraordinary budget crisis that was to erupt between the Gingrich Republicans and the Executive Branch later in the year, a confrontation so severe that it would ultimately close down most of the U.S. government for over a month.

I made one last attempt to underline the importance of the reconstruction effort, but a consensus had formed, as it often does in such meetings. It was clear that the amount of American assistance would be far less than desirable.

This exchange ended the meeting. The President asked us to return to the region quickly, and keep going until we had achieved something. Then, after greeting each new member of the team personally, he clapped me on the shoulder, pulled me aside for a moment to say he was counting on us, and was on his way back to Wyoming.

Leon Fuerth and the Sanctions Issue. On the morning of August 24, we said good-bye to Nelson Drew, and in the afternoon we walked in silence behind the horse-drawn casket of Joe Kruzal. By this time we had been to Arlington four times in three days; the week had turned into a blur. I asked the negotiating team to meet at the Officers' Club at Arlington between the two funerals so that we could begin planning our trip, which was only three days away. Because the United Nations sanctions against Serbia were always a central issue, Leon Fuerth joined us.

Fuerth, Vice President Gore's National Security Advisor, was one of those powerful but rarely seen people who play major roles behind the scene in Washington. Originally an arms-control expert, he had been a respected member of the national security community before he joined the staff of a young Tennessee Congressman named Al Gore in 1982. In 1993 the Administration gave Fuerth an important responsibility in addition to his duties as the Vice President's closest foreign policy advisor—implementing American policy worldwide on economic sanctions.* It was unprecedented to give such an assignment to a member of the Vice President's staff. But when sanctions against Bosnia became a critical issue in 1993, the Principals' Committee took responsibility away from State, apparently because of a failure to manage it properly, and gave it to Fuerth—an old friend with whom I had worked closely during Senator Gore's 1988 presidential campaign.

For months sanctions had been the subject of a heated dispute within the Contact Group, with the United States and Germany on one side, and Britain, France, and Russia on the other. Milosevic hated the sanctions. They really hurt his country, and he wanted them lifted. This gave us a potential lever over him, but by the fall of 1994, London, Paris, and Moscow wanted to lift all or most of the sanctions in return for almost nothing. Washington had a different view, although it was not held unanimously. Some officials believed we should offer Milosevic a small incentive, in the form of some sanctions relief, to "jump-start" the process; others, like Fuerth and Madeleine Albright, opposed any softening of our position without a significant reciprocal action by Milosevic. Although we had some tactical differences, I also opposed giving Milosevic relief without getting something tangible in return.

Since the end of the Cold War few issues have caused greater tension with our major European allies and Russia than sanctions. But to the credit of Vice President Gore, Leon Fuerth, and Madeleine Albright, the decision to take a hard line on sanctions proved correct; had we not done so, we would have begun the negotiations with almost no bargaining chips.

Friday, August 25, was my last day in Washington before the resumption of the shuttle. I spent it in endless meetings with foreign ambassadors and colleagues in the Department. But there was one more essential act of mourning and rebuilding. The tragedy on Mount Igman was deeply personal for the European Bureau, which had lost a truly beloved colleague. It needed to pull itself together. So, in the early afternoon, I invited the entire Bureau to join

* Fuerth's mandate, while focused heavily on Bosnia, also covered sanctions against other countries, including Iran and Iraq.

Strobe Talbott and me in the Dean Acheson Auditorium on the ground floor of the Department to decide how we were going to cope with the tragedy. I described the accident in detail, hoping to dispel some of the misunderstandings or rumors so endemic in such a situation. I asked everyone in the Bureau to give John Kornblum full support, and said that we would not replace Bob at this point. We would simply do the best we could; history would judge us by our results.

Several people asked how Bob's family was coping. Strobe told them of the extraordinary strength that Katharina Frasure was demonstrating, and described how the previous day she had visited Pete Hargreaves in the hospital, to tell him that she realized he could not have saved her husband. (Strobe, who had visited Hargreaves with her, said it was one of the most inspiring moments of his life.) Finally, I asked my colleagues to consider what permanent memorial we should set up for Bob. Then, after asking everyone to stand for a moment of silence for Bob, Joe, and Nelson, we went back to work.*

I flew to Long Island to spend the weekend with Kati. We had been married less than two months. The author of a recent book on extremists in the Middle East, she was concerned that rejectionist Bosnian Serbs—the " Hamas wing of the Serbs," as she put it—would try to kill us, especially if we were making progress toward peace. The risk was real, but we had no choice; the negotiations could not succeed unless we went to Sarajevo.

We were scheduled to leave for Europe on Sunday, August 27, but before we left, there was one last television interview, with NBC's *Meet the Press*. All through the week, the Bosnian Serbs had continued to make provocative statements, and had even exchanged fire with U.N. troops. This interview provided an opportunity to issue a clear warning that there were limits to American forbearance. Such a statement, however, required coordination within the government. On Saturday afternoon, therefore, I called Tom Donilon, Warren Christopher's chief of staff, for advice. He suggested that, while carefully avoiding a specific commitment that might be repudiated by others, I send a strong signal that we would no longer ignore hostile actions by the Bosnian Serbs. He volunteered to "protect" me within the government if anyone objected later.

Donilon, the only senior official at State with real political experience, brought a needed focus and crispness to the decision-making process. A proud "working-class kid" from Providence, Rhode Island, Tom joined the Carter White House in 1977 at the age of twenty-two, one of the youngest and bright-

est of a group of outstanding political operatives assembled by Vice President Mondale's chief of staff, James A. Johnson.* In 1993, Donilon, who was then a partner in the Washington office of Warren Christopher's law firm, went to State as an aide to Christopher and emerged, somewhat unexpectedly, as the new Secretary of State's closest advisor. Although almost unknown to the public, Donilon was widely respected by the press and within the government; he was literally indispensable to the smooth functioning of the State Department.

At 6:00 A.M. on Sunday morning, an NBC crew arrived to set up their equipment in the sitting room of our weekend house in Bridgehampton. My new family stumbled sleepily over wires and watched in dismay as the crew turned the house into a makeshift television studio. The interview covered many issues that would be critical in the next few months. With Brian Williams moderating, the conservative columnist Robert Novak challenged the heavy emphasis we put on the fact that the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs, their "president," Radovan Karadzic, and General Ratko Mladic, had been indicted as war criminals by the International War Crimes Tribunal. "Do you think it's helpful to call [Karadzic] a war criminal?" Novak asked in his famous baiting style, as always on the attack. "Do you think it's helpful in the negotiations?" I replied:

It's not a question of what I call him or what you call him. There's an international tribunal going on. And let me be clear on something. At Srebrenica a month ago, people were taken into a stadium, lined up, and massacred. It was a crime against humanity of the sort that we have rarely seen in Europe, and not since the days of Himmler and Stalin, and that's simply a fact and it has to be dealt with. I'm not going to cut a deal that absolves the people responsible for this.

Doyle McManus of the *Los Angeles Times* asked the question we had prepared for: "What leverage do you have on [the Bosnian Serbs]?" I answered:

I'd rather not go into the diplomatic details. I think secret negotiations have a right to remain somewhat secret. But I do want to make one thing clear. If this peace initiative does not get moving, dramatically moving, in the next week or two, the consequences will be very adverse to the Serbian goals. One way or another NATO will be heavily involved, and the Serbs don't want that.

* In 1981, Johnson and I formed a consulting firm, which we sold to Lehman Brothers in 1985. Jim later became chairman and CEO of Fannie Mae and chairman of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

I spent the rest of the interview trying to avoid saying what this meant—was I threatening NATO air strikes? What were the criteria for success? Under what circumstances would we send in ground troops?

Most newspapers covered the interview positively the next day. *The New York Times* ran a front-page article under the headline "U.S. Officials Say Bosnian Serbs Face NATO Attack If Talks Fail"—a headline justified by neither my interview nor the text of the story, but useful in creating the impression of a tougher policy than in fact existed. The *International Herald Tribune*, a newspaper to which we attached special importance since it was available in the Balkans, ran a similar headline: "U.S. Warns of Air Strikes Unless Serbs Negotiate."

With the interview completed, I spent the rest of the day trying to relax, even finding time to go to the local horse show, where my stepdaughter, Elizabeth, was competing. Good luck calls from Gore, Christopher, Lake, and Albright brightened the day. Some friends came over in the early evening for a long-planned housewarming party, in the middle of which, with most of the guests still there, I left for the Islip airport, where the Air Force plane carrying our new team stopped to refuel and pick me up. Boarding the C-20—the military equivalent of the Gulfstream III—we settled into our seats with nervous jokes and tried to get some sleep before Paris.

The Final Outrage. At 8:00 A.M., we landed at the military airport outside Paris. Waiting on the tarmac was our Ambassador to France, Pamela Harriman. It was typical of her that she would meet us, even at such an early hour, as a sign of support and in order to brief us immediately on the French point of view; some Ambassadors never made such an effort, no matter what the circumstances. We drove into Paris through heavy traffic, as she outlined a complicated schedule involving meetings with the French, the Contact Group representatives, and President Izetbegovic, who had asked to see us late that evening. I had time for a brief nap before our first meeting, a courtesy call on French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette. As I woke up, I turned on CNN and heard terrible news: a Bosnian Serb mortar shell had killed at least thirty-five people in a marketplace in Sarajevo. It was the second-worst incident of the war against civilians in Sarajevo. Watching the small screen fill with scenes of new carnage, I wondered if this was a deliberate response to my public warnings of the day before, which had been widely reported in Bosnia. It seemed possible and, as I noted at the time, "I felt doubly awful."

Public reaction came quickly. From Pale the Bosnian Serbs accused the Bosnian Muslims of staging the incident to draw NATO into the war. The Muslim leadership called for the suspension of the American peace initiative "unless

the obligations and role of NATO are clarified." United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali issued a statement that, typically, meant almost exactly the opposite of what it seemed to say: he "unreservedly condemned the shelling" and ordered his military commanders to "investigate this attack immediately and take appropriate action without delay." In fact, this was a device to avoid taking action.

None of this mattered much. What counted was whether the United States would act decisively and persuade its NATO allies to join in the sort of massive air campaign that we had so often talked about but never even come close to undertaking. Would our threats and warnings, including my own on *Meet the Press* the previous day, finally be backed up with action?

Even before we knew the exact casualty toll—thirty-eight killed and more than eighty-five wounded—I felt this was the final test for the West. Was this a deliberate Bosnian Serb attempt to show the world that our threats were empty? Or was it simply a single mortar fired by a single angry person? And the key question: what would we do in response?

Within a short time, Strobe Talbott, who was acting Secretary of State, called. He felt that a military response to the latest outrage was "essential," and wanted to know if the negotiating team agreed. He asked a key question: what effect might retaliatory air strikes have on the negotiations? "Your advice could be decisive," he said. "There's a lot of disagreement here."

I did not need to think about my reply. The brutal stupidity of the Bosnian Serbs had given us an unexpected last chance to do what should have been done three years earlier. I told him to start NATO air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs—not minor retaliatory "pinpricks," but a serious and, if possible, sustained air campaign, which was now authorized by the "London rules." It would be better to risk failure in the negotiations than let the Serbs get away with another criminal act. This was the most important test of American leadership since the end of the Cold War, I said, not only in Bosnia, but in Europe.

Our telephone conversation was about how to respond to the newest Bosnian Serb atrocity, but it was also part of a controversy that had gone on for thirty years about the relationship between diplomacy and airpower. This issue had haunted American decision makers since 1965, when the use of airpower against North Vietnam had been one of the most controversial aspects of that most controversial of all American wars.

Vietnam was, of course, the seminal event of our generation. By 1995, its shadows were lengthening, but they had marked almost every contemporary official and politician in Washington—some as student radicals, others as Vietnam veterans; some as doves, others as hawks. There was irony in my support of air strikes. As a young Foreign Service officer working on Vietnam,

I had disagreed with the air campaign against North Vietnam. To many of those opposing the use of airpower in Bosnia the lesson of Vietnam and Kuwait was that airpower would be ineffective unless backed up by ground troops—a political impossibility in Bosnia. But the comparison was dangerously misleading: Bosnia was different, and so were our objectives. While we had to learn from Vietnam, we could not be imprisoned by it. Bosnia was not Vietnam, the Bosnian Serbs were not the Vietcong, and Belgrade was not Hanoi. The Bosnian Serbs, poorly trained bullies and criminals, would not stand up to NATO air strikes the way the seasoned and indoctrinated Vietcong and North Vietnamese had. And, as we had seen in the Krajina, Belgrade was not going to back the Bosnian Serbs the way Hanoi had backed the Vietcong.

The August 28 mortar attack was hardly the first challenge to Western policy, nor the worst incident of the war; it was only the latest. But it was different because of its timing: coming immediately after the launching of our diplomatic shuttle and the tragedy on Igman, it appeared not only as an act of terror against innocent people in Sarajevo, but as the first direct affront to the United States. As we sleepwalked through a busy schedule in Paris, my mind drifted back over the many failures of Western leadership over the last few years, and I hoped—prayed—that this time it would be different.