

UDK: 323.173(497.5=163.41)"1991"
329.273(497.5=163.41)"1991/1995"
329(497.5)SNS"1991"
Izvorni znanstveni članak
Received: September 12, 2011.
Accepted: October 10, 2011.

AN AVOIDABLE FAILURE: PEACEKEEPING IN CROATIA, 1991-1995

Ivica MIŠKULIN*

In this work, the author analyses the grounds for establishment of the two peacekeeping operations deployed in Croatia in the early and mid-1990s, as well as implementation of their two most important components and their effect. The author ascertains that these were classic peacekeeping operations based on documents which were drafted by diplomats Cyrus Vance and Marrack Goulding on behalf of the United Nations. Both operations were ultimately assessed as unsuccessful, mostly because they reflected the international community's ineffective and uncoordinated policy toward Yugoslavia and the states which emerged after its violent disintegration.

Key words: Vance Plan, UNPROFOR, UNCRO, peacekeeping operations, Republic of Croatia

The Vance plan, which we had been sent to implement, would clearly benefit the Croats in the long term; the question was, how long would they wait before they took matters into their own hands? A lot would depend on the efficiency of the UNPROFOR operation, and the strength of the diplomatic support we would receive from the Security Council.

Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper. The Road to Sarajevo*, 115.

On December 28, 1992, the afternoon I arrived in Zagreb, I was invited to meet the Foreign Minister of Croatia, Mate Granic. This was my first meeting with a man who was already a key figure in the negotiations, and with whom I would later spend many hours. Balding, immaculately dressed, charming, and polite, he greeted me and almost immediately began to explain why, if the United Nations did not fulfill its obligations under the Vance plan and restore the Krajina to its rightful owners, another war between Serbia and Croatia was inevitable.

Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 44-45

* Ivica Miškulin, Ph.D., Croatian Catholic University, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

Introduction

The violent collapse of the Yugoslav federation, which occurred in the earliest stage of the post-Cold War world's development, upset the victorious self-confidence of the democratic West. From the early 1990s to the onset of the new millennium, a considerable portion of South-east Europe was the focus of massive armed conflicts, a high degree of destruction of property and, most importantly, numerous and often brutal killings of civilian populations. Such conflicts had not been seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The ensuing shock was not, however, due to a lack of foreknowledge: the plan put forth by the political, scholarly and religious elites of the most numerous nation of communist Yugoslavia, the Serbs, for the country's reorganization along expressly centralist lines as the best guarantor of Serbian predominance (which from the very start implied the use of armed force as well), was recognized in due time in the decision-making centres of the democratic West.¹ By the same token, the expected resistance to Belgrade's intentions, which constituted a genuine threat to the national individuality of all non-Serbian nations, ensured that armed conflict would become a certainty. The Croatian resistance to Belgrade's armed aggression, the first conflict to assume a massive framework, should have served as sufficient warning to prevent the later spread of warfare to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

The international community's intervention in Yugoslavia was therefore influenced by a series of reasons. Fear of the conflict spreading to surrounding regions, which could have drawn the involvement of neighbouring states, the possible influence of Yugoslavia's violent disintegration on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the extent of the humanitarian crisis and the potential opportunity to verify the stability of the new geopolitical situation at the close of the Cold War – which had as its principal features the global dominance of the United States of America, the reunified Germany and efforts aimed at the political and economic unification of the continent led by the European Community (EC) – were some of the more important of these reasons. Ultimately, there was virtually no major international organization that did not intervene in the process of resolving the Yugoslav crisis and armed conflict in the states which emerged after its disintegration. The reasons, methods, particularities and results of this intervention have been analysed in numerous scholarly works, as well as popular histories and current affairs texts and memoirs.² The aim of this work is to present the causes for the establishment

¹ See, for example, the numerous reports of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the period 1987-1991, cited in Josip Glaurdić, *Vrijeme Europe. Zapadne sile i raspad Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: MATE d.o.o., 2011).

² Of the numerous examples, I cite here as the most useful: Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, *Diplomacy on the Edge. Containment of Ethnic Conflict and the Minorities Working Group of the Conferences on Yugoslavia* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), Norbert Both, *From Indifference to Entrapment. The Netherlands and the Yugoslav*

of peacekeeping operations in Croatia under the aegis of the United Nations (UN), examine its fundamental characteristics where this pertains to the two most vital aspects of implementation, and attempt to ascertain the primary reasons for their failure.

The United Nations and the End of the Cold War

Ambitiously conceived as a collective guarantee of global security after the tragic experiences of a just concluded World War, the UN was forced to confront bitter reality immediately upon the close of said war. The constant stand-off between the US and the USSR completely paralyzed its most important body, the Security Council, rendering it ineffective. The operations of the UN, or rather its peacekeeping forces, was reduced to the maintenance of precarious ceasefires, while nothing came of its idealized role as the world's most important peacekeeper. Harbingers of the end of the Cold War, i.e., the increasingly apparent weakening of the USSR, indicated the possibility of change. The U.S. administration headed by the elder President George Bush assumed an increasingly prominent position within the Security Council, which entailed increasingly better cooperation with the UN Secretary General, Peruvian Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, and the beginning of a solution to the sizeable US debt arrears to the UN. The success of the intervention in Iraq and Kuwait in 1990 and 1991, which had UN approval, although carried out by US forces, was the most visible sign of these newly-established good relations.³ The UN therefore became an important mechanism of Bush's 'New World Order' of global security, which was supposed to ensure the promotion of democratic processes everywhere in the world where this need arose by means of humanitarian interventions freed of the burden of *Realpolitik*.⁴ These changes in the situation necessitated changes within the UN's system. These were laid out in a document

Crisis 1990-1995 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), J. Glaurdić, *Vrijeme Europe*, Marrack Goulding, *The Peacemonger* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will. International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ* (Kragujevac: Prizma, 1996), Michael Libal, *Njemačka politika i jugoslavenska kriza 1991.-1992.* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2008), Mario Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks. Diplomatski procesi iza zatvorenih vrata 1990.-1997.* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus, 2000), David Owen, *Balkanska odiseja* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1998), Saadia Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars. The Critical Years 1990-1995* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), Henri Vajnans, *U žrvnju. Jugoslavenska hronika jul 1991 – avgust 1992* (Beograd: Radio B92, 1996).

³ Stephen F. Burgess, *The United Nations under Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1992-1997* (Lanham, Maryland and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001), pp. 2-7.

⁴ William J. Durch, "Keeping the Peace: Politics and Lessons of the 1990s", in: William J. Durch, ed., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (New York: A Henry L. Stimson Centre Book, St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 2.

drafted in June 1992 by the ambitious new UN Secretary General, Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali, called *An Agenda for Peace*. In it, the Secretary General asserted among other things that the UN should be oriented toward more dynamic intervention models, above all those aimed at peace enforcement.⁵ In the period after the end of Cold War, the USA exercised a dominant role in the decision making in the United Nations, but after the events in Somalia in 1993 the relations between the American administration and Ghali cooled down. All that was therefore left was to ascertain the extent to which the entire UN system was prepared to respond to the requirements of its intended role as the extension of US foreign policy.

UN Involvement in the Conflict in Croatia

The lead in the international community's peace mediation in the Yugoslav crisis was accorded to the European Community. In the shadow of efforts aimed at more intense political and economic integration of EC member states, they decided to test their ability to create a common foreign policy and coordinated European security problem-solving with obvious enthusiasm. The problem which had begun to break out in Europe's back yard could thus not be left to anyone else. In September 1991, when the special Peace Conference on the Former Yugoslavia began functioning, the EC had already set down three fundamental parameters within which a solution had to be found. First and foremost, preservation of Yugoslavia's integrity was no longer the most important objective of the international community. This stance was confirmed by the Brijuni Declaration of July 1991, which accorded *de facto* recognition to Slovenia's independence. By stressing that changes in republic borders made by force would not be recognized, these borders became *de facto* international borders. Eventually, the internal republic borders of the disappearing Yugoslav federation would become more acceptable to the international community, i.e., they could be recognized insofar as they met the high criterion of protection of ethnic minorities in all of their territories. Insistence on a solution to the conflict that would have gone beyond the boundaries of these parameters simply could not become the international community's official policy. These parameters were rooted in the acknowledgement of Serbia's aggressive war against the remaining republics of Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, some of the bigger member state did not abandon special politics, often based on the denial of reality and misrepresentation of history, that objectively were attempts to alter this fixed conflict-resolution framework. One of the most important reasons for this was the widespread stance – especially favored by the Great Britain – whereby a solution had to come through a policy of satisfying Serbian interests, which included tendencies such as the aspiration to establish a regionally hegemonic

⁵ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished. A U.S.-U.N. Saga* (London-New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), pp. 27-28.

role for Serbia and opposition to recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence.⁶ The consequences of this lack of unity were devastating. The overriding features of EC intervention were the frequent imposition of the interests of individual member states ahead of their common interests as a result of the inability to formulate a common policy, a notable lack of will for other forms of intervention except those with a political, economic or humanitarian character, and an evident inability to keep pace with unfolding events. This obviously benefited the stronger side in the conflict in Croatia. Belgrade had, it was noted, recognized at an early phase “the deeply paralyzing differences and rivalries within the EC, America’s lack of interest and the weakness of international mechanisms” and it correctly gained the conviction “that the world will recognize the factual state of affairs and extol the victors”.⁷ In other words, the conflict in Croatia was not halted, rather in the early autumn of 1991 it was additionally inflamed, while the EC’s activities served as an illustration of the disunity and disarray of the entire international community.

The threat to international security which the conflict in Yugoslavia represented, as well as the potential outbreak of a humanitarian crisis of major proportions compelled the United Nations to take a stance. Thus, UN Security Council Resolution 713 of 25 September 1991 was a reflection of the UN’s prevailing stance on the necessity of taking steps to halt the conflict, additionally prompted by the interventions of many states such as Austria, Australia and Canada. The central points of emphasis in the Resolution were the introduction of a general and complete embargo on the deliveries of arms to all sides in the conflict and the refusal to recognize violent changes in republic borders.⁸ The resolution reflected the EC’s position, which in fact served as its outline. It is important to note that the UN Security Council particularly stressed its support of all EC mediation efforts and endorsed all agreements which emerged or could emerge as a result of such mediation. This therefore meant that the UN had actually consented to the above-described parameters meant to find a solution to the conflict. Resolution 713 thus established a delicate balance between the EC and UN vis-à-vis the Yugoslav crisis.⁹ The position of the lead international mediator was retained by the EC, while the UN, wielding the authority of the world’s most important peace-making organization, upheld the EC’s mediation efforts, which were believed to have considerably reinforced the latter. Nonetheless, the very fact that the Security Council adopted a special document on the situation in Yugoslavia, in

⁶ G.-H. Ahrens, *Diplomacy*, pp. 8-9, 86-99.

⁷ M. Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks*, p. 111.

⁸ Anđelko Milardović, ed., *Ujedinjeni narodi. Rezolucije o Republici Hrvatskoj*. UNPROFOR, (Osijek: PANLIBER, 1995), Resolution 713 of 25 September 1991, pp. 19-21.

⁹ Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, *Pilgrimage for Peace. A Secretary-General’s Memoir* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), p. 477.

the binding form of a resolution, meant that mediation of the crisis had in fact begun to move to the UN as well to a considerable degree.

Resolution 713 was quickly accompanied by the decision to appoint veteran US diplomat Cyrus R. Vance the UN Secretary General's special envoy for Yugoslavia. Vance's appointment was the result of successful lobbying by British and French diplomats, particularly Lord Peter Carrington, who was presiding over the Peace Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. He and Vance were tied by many years of friendship.¹⁰ There should be no doubt that Vance's appointment was aligned with the positions of US diplomacy, even though there were attempts to deny this.¹¹ In any case, Vance enjoyed a high diplomatic reputation in the world as a US diplomatic representative even prior to his appointment as the UN Secretary General's envoy. So all Yugoslav participants rightly saw Vance as the extended arm of the US administration. Vance had gained enviable experience in peace mediation during his service as US Secretary of State under President Jimmy Carter. In some circles, Vance was deemed an honest, if uninformed, broker.¹² However, this was less important; the key aspect for any international mediator was his ability to secure a compromise between the warring sides. For example, de Cuéllar deemed him particularly skilled and tactful in mediation, which required working within the previously-defined framework of a given proposal.¹³

The adoption of Resolution 713 in September 1991, and particularly its provision on the general arms embargo, signified that the UN Security Council had in fact accepted the position which visibly benefited the stronger party to the conflict, i.e., Belgrade. Namely, the key EC member states, France and Great Britain, which politically dominated the EC, were also permanent members of the UN Security Council. Instead of facilitating better and more substantial communication between the two organizations involved in solving the Yugoslav crisis, precisely the opposite happened; exclusively advocating their own national interests, France and Great Britain effectively curtailed cooperation between the UN and the EC.¹⁴ Thus, the key member states of the EC, an organization which suffered an obvious failure in attempting to halt the conflict in Croatia, were now poised to do the same thing within the UN Security Council. It is therefore no surprise that the Yugoslav collective presidency, which at that point consisted exclusively of Serbian and pro-Serbian representatives from Serbia, Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo, released a special communiqué on 2 October 1991 in which it unambiguously endorsed

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 480-481.

¹¹ For example, R. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 30.

¹² M. Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks*, p. 244.

¹³ J. Pérez de Cuéllar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 486.

¹⁴ Spyros Economides, Paul Taylor, "Former Yugoslavia", *United Nations Interventionism 1991-2004*, Mats Berdal and Spyros Economides, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 83.

Resolution 713 in its entirety.¹⁵ The uncoordinated policy of the EC, caused by the partisan political interests of its most important member states, thus – with no apparent desire for change – became an integral component of the UN’s official policy on the Yugoslav crisis.

It was therefore not just a matter of the successful Serbian ploy to play the card of discord within the international community. For during October 1991, the EC nonetheless managed to iron out the details of a complex peace plan which was presented for consideration to the conflicting sides in Yugoslavia. The plan foresaw the possibility of independence for those republics expressing a desire for this, while not excluding the potential creation of a later alliance of sovereign republics. Nonetheless, internationally-recognized sovereignty could only be achieved by meeting additional criteria set by the EC, above all the institution of comprehensive mechanisms to safeguard ethnic minority rights, which in the case of Croatia meant securing special political and territorial status for the Serbian minority. All of this was rejected by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević on several occasions, and not even threats of political isolation, economic sanctions – which were indeed imposed later – nor exclusion from the work of the peace conference in The Hague could compel him to assent.¹⁶ The reasons for his opposition lay in the assessment that a political solution would not guarantee a sufficient degree of protection for the Serbs in Croatia. He nevertheless did not entirely refuse, rather he assessed them as insufficiently refined, i.e., he sought “firm assurances from the international community through a suitable international treaty, and a permanent international body that would conduct monitoring of enforcement of such a treaty”.¹⁷ Milošević actually demonstrated willingness to negotiate, meaning his rejection of the solutions on offer was not final. As to the aforementioned permanent international body, he obviously envisioned some type of neutral external military protection that would effectively safeguard Serbian conquests in Croatia. Three days prior to a new rejection of the EC’s peace proposal, on 2 November 1991, he and Borisav Jović, the Serbian member of the collective federal presidency, aligned their stance that a majority of Croatian territories “in which a majority Serbian population lived [should be] under Serbian authority” and that, therefore, it would be best to seek from the UN “that it protect them with its peace forces”.¹⁸ Only three days later, on 9 November

¹⁵ “Sprečiti opšti rat”, *Borba* (Belgrade), 3 October 1991.

¹⁶ Slobodanka Kovačević, Putnik Dajić, eds., *Hronologija jugoslovenske krize 1942 – 1993* (Belgrade: Institut za evropske studije, 1994), p. 45.

¹⁷ Sonja Biserko, Saška Stanojlović, eds., *Poslednja šansa Jugoslavije: haška konferencija 1991* (Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2002), Report from the meeting of the Conference on Yugoslavia at the highest level in The Hague held on 18 October 1991, p. 102.

¹⁸ B. Jović, *Poslednji dani*, notation for 2 November 1991, p. 407.

1991, the federal presidency sent a formal letter to the UN Security Council, in which it sought the urgent deployment of peace forces in Croatia.¹⁹

At the same time he rejected the peace plan put forward by Carrington's peace conference, Milošević simultaneously denied this identical right to all of its other members. This also pertained to the EC, which in the eyes of the Serbian side, lost the status of an impartial international broker. As part of the peace plan, the EC sought the same degree of protection of minority privileges be allowed for the Kosovo Albanians, while it saw the solution to the Serbian question in Croatia, regardless of the degree of their protection, within the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Croatia. Additionally, at several points the EC explicitly stated that the Serbian side is considered the primary driver of the Yugoslav crisis. The EC was therefore not acceptable to Belgrade as an unbiased mediator nor as an impartial guarantor of the sought-after political/territorial privileges of the rebel Serbs in Croatia. On the other hand, the EC did not even have any means to impose its proposal. Thus, in early November 1991 the EC's peace mediation reached an impasse.²⁰ It was just at this point that Belgrade, in the words of Dutch diplomat and EC special envoy Henri Wynaendts, proposed UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia, i.e., it unholstered its "lethal weapon".²¹

The contention that the EC's peace mediation exceeded the boundaries of impartiality was not exclusive to Belgrade. There was a similar line of thinking in a part of UN's administrative structures. For example, Vance himself, after his first visits to Yugoslavia, advised the UN Secretary General to oppose the tendency of the increasingly direct specification of Serbia as the exclusive culprit for the failure of peace talks.²² This stance was also taken by Briton Marrack Goulding, the Under-secretary General in charge of peacekeeping operations.²³ The EC's neutrality vis-à-vis Serbia was for that reason, according to the UN's interpretation, responsible for the failure of the peace talks. The threat and then introduction of economic sanctions against Serbia in early November 1991 was deemed just another example of the EC's bias. In Belgrade, Vance said the institution of sanctions would only additionally fan the flames of warfare and impede the progress of the peace process.²⁴ There are reasons for believing that Vance's activities were coordinated with the work of the chief of the peace conference in The Hague, Lord Carrington, who also publicly expressed his disagreement with instituting sanctions against Serbia. German diplomats believed they were thereby intentionally sabotaging the

¹⁹ *Hronologija*, 46.

²⁰ *Poslednja šansa*, Report from the fourth plenary session at the highest level of the Conference on Yugoslavia in The Hague held on 5 November 1991, p. 136.

²¹ Henri Wynaendts, *U žrvnju*, p. 99.

²² J. Pérez de Cuéllar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 484.

²³ M. Goulding, *The Peacemonger* (London, 2003), p. 294.

²⁴ "Sankcije ne mogu rešiti krizu", *Borba*, 7 November 1991.

EC's efforts.²⁵ De Cuéllar expressed the UN's prevailing position when he announced his grave disappointment "that Europe has thus far failed to find a solution to the Yugoslav crisis".²⁶ This stance was driven by the belief that distinguishing Serbia as the primarily culpable party would lead to its political isolation, and thus diminish the chance of reaching a peaceful solution. The UN increasingly saw itself in the position of an international patron of the rebel Croatian Serbs so desired by Serbia's leader.

US diplomat Richard Holbrooke correctly observed that the most important reason for the successful outcome of Vance's mediation in halting the conflict in Croatia during November and December 1991 could be found in the fact that he was acting on behalf of an international organization which has armed force at its disposal.²⁷ UN peacekeeping forces were, as already noted, an acceptable solution for Milošević, because they were deployed as an impartial international mediator. Since their deployment signified, besides a halt to hostilities, the demilitarization of the zones of their deployment, the withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) was necessary, which was entirely acceptable to Croatia. For the Serbian leadership accurately assessed that at the moment of Croatia's inevitable recognition, the JNA would be proclaimed an occupation force.²⁸ For his part, Croatian President Franjo Tuđman observed that the UN peacekeeping forces could "play a positive role in achieving peace in this area, if the JNA withdraws from Croatia's entire territory".²⁹ The first indication of Vance's success in satisfying the interests of all sides occurred in Geneva in late November 1991, when a cease of hostilities was negotiated. The agreement was signed in the UN's regional headquarters, with Vance himself presiding over the meeting. It is then not surprising that de Cuéllar noted with unconcealed pleasure that it was exclusively the UN's reputation which served as the key factor to the successful outcome of the meeting.³⁰ The armistice ironed out in Geneva was, however, not observed. The close of high-intensity conflict in Croatia became effective at the very beginning of January 1992 with the signing of an agreement in Sarajevo that ended hostilities.³¹ The reason should be sought in the behaviour of the JNA which, as opposed to its previous stance and in compliance with Belgrade's view, saw the conclusion of the

²⁵ M. Libal, *Njemačka politika*, p. 98.

²⁶ "Razočaranje zbog neuspjeha Evrope", *Borba*, 8 November 1991.

²⁷ R. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 31.

²⁸ B. Jović, *Poslednji dani*, Notation of 5 December 1991, p. 420.

²⁹ S. Vranić, "Mir – novogodišnja čestitka", *Borba*, 15 November 1991.

³⁰ J. Pérez de Cuéllar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 489.

³¹ A. Milardović, ed., *Dokumenti o državnosti Republike Hrvatske (od prvih višestranačkih izbora 1990. do međunarodnog priznanja 15. siječnja 1992.)* (Zagreb: Alineja, 1992), Document no. 6, Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of 2 January 1992, pp. 165-166.

conflict in Croatia as a strategic decision.³² Among the peace mediators, the signing of this ceasefire was only attended by Vance, which visibly altered the focus of the international community's mediation. The Sarajevo ceasefire of 1992 enshrined the positions of the parties to the conflict at that moment: the agreement of the Serbian leadership with the extent of territories occupied in Croatia, the withdrawal of the JNA to Bosnia-Herzegovina as a reflection of the expansion of Belgrade's conquest aims and the desire of the Croatian leadership for a halt to warfare. The UN succeeded where the EC could not.

The Vance Plan

Already in mid-October 1991, Carrington stated for the Belgrade media that there was "a general desire' by the key Yugoslav actors that United Nations peacekeeping troops be deployed in the war-torn districts [of the Republic of Croatia]".³³ The document which specified the locations of their deployment and the methods for their operation with reference to the conflicting sides was presented precisely at the Geneva meeting held in late November 1991. According to Goulding, the plan was the subject of heated debate, but it was generally accepted and its further refinement was arranged.³⁴ It was made public in the first half of December 1991 as a special annex to the UN Secretary General's report, under the official title Plan for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Yugoslavia.³⁵ This plan, which would quickly become better known as the Vance Plan, although in fact drafted by Goulding, was actually an interim measure or transitional arrangement, with the basic objective of stabilizing the situation in the zones of deployment of UN peacekeeping forces, called the UN protected areas, for the purpose of unimpeded progress of diplomatic negotiations which should have led to a lasting solution to the conflict. The plan, therefore, called for the deployment of UN peacekeepers of various types in the areas engulfed by the conflict with the task of demilitarizing them and ensuring the safety of the civilian populations, thus creating the conditions for the return of all displaced persons and refugees. The plan stipulated the establishment of three UN Protected Areas: Eastern Slavonia, Western Slavonia and Krajina.³⁶ In Boutros-Ghali's report to the Security Council of 20 Febru-

³² Davor Marijan, *Slom Titove armije. JNA i raspad Jugoslavije 1987.-1992.* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing – Tehnička knjiga, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2008), p. 333.

³³ "Svi za mirovne trupe", *Borba*, 15 October 1991.

³⁴ M. Goulding, *Peacemonger*, p. 300.

³⁵ www.un.org/documents/UN/Documentation_Centre (UNDOC), S/23280, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 721 (1991), Annex III, 11 December 1991, pp. 15-21.

³⁶ *Dokumenti*, Document no. 4, Plan for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Yugoslavia (November-December 1991), 160. For more on the Vance Plan, see Nikica Barić, *Srpska pobuna u Hrvatskoj 1990-1995.* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2005), pp.147-150;

ary 1992, this was amended, so the aforementioned areas were divided into four protected sectors, which were given names to correspond to the compass points, as sectors East, West, North and South, or United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) East, West, North and South.³⁷

The Vance Plan was not intended to serve as a long-term solution to the conflict. It was in fact the international community's most important means to arrive at a peace treaty. The latter point was the source of its most vital feature, and this was the enforcement of the status quo in the designated UN Protected Areas. In other words, the Vance Plan preserved the status in those areas of the Republic of Croatia that were under the control of the rebel Serbs, which included the continued functioning of their military, police and administrative institutions. So instead of the UN assisting the Croatian authorities in establishing control over its borders and establishing Croatia's constitutional order in the occupied territories, Zagreb had to consent to the continued functioning of the rebel authorities. This was the source of a smouldering conflict between the Croatian leadership and UN representatives, Goulding most of all, during all of December 1991 and January 1992.³⁸ Even so, the victor in this confrontation was known from the very beginning. For already in early November 1991, the EC specified that Croatia's independence could be recognized only in case of a comprehensive solution which encompassed guarantees for the full protection of ethnic minorities.³⁹ In this sense, a special constitutional law governing the rights of ethnic minorities, enacted by the Croatian Parliament in early December 1991, obviously was not the type of guarantee that could satisfy Milošević. Tuđman was confronted with this fact in early February 1992, when German diplomats warned him that his acceptance of the Vance Plan was in fact the key factor in Croatia's international recognition.⁴⁰ Only several days later, on 6 February 1992, Tuđman sent Vance a letter in which he told him that he fully and unconditionally accepted the UN's peacekeeping concept.⁴¹ An unanticipated problem for Belgrade, which saw the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces as a strategic aim since late October 1991, emerged when the leader of the rebel Serbs, Milan Babić, opposed the plan. Demanding that

Vladimir Filipović, "Kontroverze Vanceova plana", *Polemos*, 9 (2008), no. 1 (21): 91-115, and M. Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks*, pp. 247-249.

³⁷ Momir Stojković, ed., *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1876 - 1996*. (Belgrade: JP Službeni list SRJ, SJU RTJ Međunarodna politika, 1999), Document no. 530, Report of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali on deployment of "blue helmets" to Yugoslavia, dated 20 February 1992, Annex I, III: p. 559.

³⁸ For more on this, see M. Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks*, pp. 238-244, 249-254.

³⁹ Slavoljub Šušić, Zlatoje Terzić, Nikola Petrović, eds., *Zbornik dokumenata iz oblasti odbrane i bezbednosti Jugoslavije 1990-1991 godine*, (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 2002), Exhibit no. 128, Declaration on Yugoslavia of 8 November 1991, pp. 550-551.

⁴⁰ M. Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks*, p. 251.

⁴¹ *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, Document no. 530, Report of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali on deployment of "blue helmets" to Yugoslavia, dated 20 February 1992, Annex I, III: p. 561.

the self-proclaimed Serbian Autonomous District of Krajina, which changed its name to the Republic of Serbian Krajina in December 1991, had to be entitled to express its consent for the arrival of peacekeeping troops, he was actually attempting to secure the backdoor confirmation of the statehood of this 'republic'.⁴² The Serbian political and military leadership managed to break down Babić's opposition in mid-February 1992, which was the fruit of a long lasting campaign to convince the rebel Serbs of the benefits they would derive from the Vance Plan.⁴³ Immediately thereafter, Boutros-Ghali notified the UN Security Council that it could begin decision-making on the organization of peacekeeping forces.⁴⁴

Determination of the Type of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Croatia

The most widespread form of UN peace-making intervention during the Cold War consisted of the traditional peacekeeping operation. Based on the consent of all sides to a conflict, the neutrality of the peacekeepers and their use of force only for the purpose of self-defence reduced their role to separating conflicting sides. Since UN peacekeeping forces were conceived as a means for prevention, their mission did not surpass the framework of maintenance of the status quo in the areas of their deployment, i.e., it did not imply the resolution of a given conflict.⁴⁵ The UN peace operations established in Croatia in February 1992 and March 1995 bore almost all the features of traditional peacekeeping. The consent of the conflicting sides was achieved, as noted, by acceptance of the Vance Plan in February 1992. A traditional peacekeeping operation implies establishment of a classic buffer zone as the key operative means for separating the territories under control of the conflicting sides.⁴⁶ The UN peacekeeping troops in Croatia were deployed to the four UNPAs and on the Prevlaka Peninsula. The locations of their deployment were subject to

⁴² Mate Rupić, ed., *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat 1990.-1995. Dokumenti* (Zagreb-Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2007), Document no. 120, Minutes to the 14th meeting of the Krajina Autonomous District Government of 18 November 1991, II: pp. 272-275.

⁴³ For more on this, see N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, pp. 150-162.

⁴⁴ *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, Document no. 530, Report of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali on deployment of "blue helmets" to Yugoslavia, dated 20 February 1992, Annex I, III: p. 561.

⁴⁵ For more on traditional peacekeeping operations, see Bojan Milisavljević, *Nove mirovne misije organizacije Ujedinjenih nacija* (Belgrade: Pravni fakultet u Beogradu, Službeni glasnik, 2007), pp. 35-51.

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Biermann, Martin Vadset, "Setting the Scene. The Challenge to the United Nations: Peacekeeping in a Civil War", *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the Former Yugoslavia*, W. Biermann, M. Vadset, ed. (Ashgate: Aldershot, 1999), pp. 17-18.

dispute between the conflicting sides since September 1991, when the possibility of posting peacekeeping forces in Yugoslavia was only a remote possibility. The Croatian authorities demanded their deployment along the internationally-recognized borders, while Belgrade and the rebel Serbs insisted on the ceasefire line. Ultimately, a compromise solution was found: peacekeeping troops were deployed along both lines, and in between them, although not in equal measure. So the UNPA concept necessarily constituted a vital deviation from the established buffer zone concept. Even so, the operations of UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia points to the conclusion that much greater attention was accorded to supervision of the ceasefire line than the status inside the UNPAs or surveillance of traffic on Croatia's borders. For example, at the end of January 1992, UN Under-secretary General Goulding told the rebel Serbs that the demilitarization of the entire territory of the RSK should not be insisted upon, "but rather from both frontlines. This should be 5 km on each side of the front".⁴⁷ By the same token, a key provision of the ceasefire agreement of March 1994 was in fact the establishment of a 2 km-wide buffer zone between the two sides, over which the UN peacekeepers were supposed to place under their control.⁴⁸ The entire agreement, according to the interpretations of the peacekeeping force command itself in Zagreb, rested on the "deployment of UN forces between Croat and Serb forces inside the buffer zone".⁴⁹ Inside UNPA West, peacekeeping forces were oriented toward controlling the contact line between the respective territories held by Croatian forces and rebel Serb forces.⁵⁰ The marked orientation of UN peacekeeping forces toward separating the conflicting sides was therefore clearly apparent. It may thus be concluded that the introduction of the UNPA concept as a modification of the classic buffer zone did not prove successful. However, all of the problems involved in traditional peacekeeping operations were well known even prior to the commencement of the UN peacekeeping mission in Croatia, while the excessive dependency on the earlier experiences of UN buffer zones was actually one of these problems.⁵¹ Even so, the failure of the UNPA concept may also be viewed in a different light. Set up as a compromise between the mutually exclusive Croatian and Serbian positions on the deployment sites of UN peacekeepers,

⁴⁷ M. Rupi , ed., *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat* (Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2008), Document no. 65, Report of the JNA 9th Corps Command, 2nd Military District, on the meeting between Milan Babi  and UN envoy Murrack Goulding and the positions taken, 28 February 1992, III: p. 168.

⁴⁸ "Sporazum o prekidu vatre", *Ve ernji list*, Zagreb, 31 March 1994.

⁴⁹ Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MVPEIRH), Zagreb, Croatian Government (VRH)/UNPROFOR and European Community Monitoring Mission Office (UUNPFPMZ), UNPROFOR/Headquarters Zagreb (HQZG), Implementation of Ceasefire Agreement of 30 March 1994.

⁵⁰ M. Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks*, pp. 257-258.

⁵¹ John MacKinlay, "Military Responses to Complex Emergencies", *The United Nations and Civil Wars*, Thomas G. Weiss, ed. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p. 55.

the UNPAs were undermined by the UN itself from the very start. After all, the UN peacekeepers had in a way just taken the place of the JNA in the role of protecting the rebel Croatian Serbs, so the concentration on physical separation was simply a logical consequence of this stance.

Probably the most important feature of traditional peacekeeping operations is the limited possibility for the use of force (arms). With rare exceptions, the UN peace keeping units could use force solely for self defence. This implies its use exclusively against military forces, its temporary nature (response to attack) and its extent which should be in proportion to the severity of the attack that precipitated its use.⁵² According to the Vance Plan, the armed members of the UN peacekeeping force could employ force only “as a last resort and, naturally, only in self-defence.”⁵³ Other opinions are nonetheless available. For example, according to American authors W.J. Durch and James A. Scheare, UN peacekeepers in Croatia could have used force even outside of the narrow confines of self-defence, i.e., to defend the territory and resident population entrusted to them in case of direct attack, and to resist armed attempts aimed at preventing peacekeepers from performing their duties and military or paramilitary attacks in the UNPAs.⁵⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 807 of February 1993, adopted after the Croatian military operation in the Zadar hinterland, may be cited as something of a confirmation of this assertion. Among other things, it contains the demand that both sides adhere to the ceasefire; the demand is accompanied by a reference to chapter seven of the UN Charter.⁵⁵ The latter foresees the use of force in situations deemed a threat to international peace and security.⁵⁶ In the aforementioned case of Resolution 807, this obviously meant the possibility of using force, either by changing the rules of engagement of the peacekeeping forces themselves in order to expand the right to use of force, or via outside armed intervention for the purpose of assisting UN peacekeepers under the aegis of the UN Security Council. During the period under observation, none of these possibilities were exploited; the use of armed force by UN peacekeepers in Croatia remained within the constraints imposed by the Vance Plan. This assessment was not even altered by several armed incidents between Croatian forces and the UN Canadian Battalion (CANBAT)⁵⁷ in the area of the Medak Pocket, which

⁵² B. Milisavljević, *Nove mirovne misije*, pp. 45-49.

⁵³ *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, Document no. 525, Vance Plan: UN peacekeeping plan for Yugoslavia, Geneva, 3 January 1992, p. 528.

⁵⁴ W. J. Durch, James A. Scheare, “Faultlines: UN Operations in the Former Yugoslavia”, *UN Peacekeeping*, p. 210.

⁵⁵ *The United Nations and the Situation in the Former Yugoslavia* (New York: United Nations – Department of Public Information, 1996), p. 147.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁵⁷ Hereinafter, when specifying individual infantry battalions of the UN peacekeeping forces, I shall use either an acronym as the one cited here or the general term for the residents of the state from which the relevant unit came (in this case Canadians).

occurred in September 1993. For according to available information, this was more of a chance skirmish caused by a misunderstanding between the civilian and military components of the UN peacekeeping mission and the misguided desire of the Canadians for some form of combat.⁵⁸ In other words, CANBAT did not use armed force to impose a provision of the Vance Plan or any other agreement. The most important reason for avoidance of active use of force was the view that it could have led to loss of the UN peacekeeping force's neutrality. This could have then engendered a hostile stance among one of the parties to the conflict, thereby threatening the safety of peacekeepers in the field. Imposition, particularly if it is implemented by armed force, always implies a certain risk, and, as noted, "the Security Council and the countries that have sent [peacekeeping] troops did not want to expose their personnel to harm by use of force".⁵⁹ The limited right to use of force and the exercise of this right relegated almost exclusively to self-defence by UN peacekeepers were perhaps the most important features of the peacekeeping operation in Croatia. In this sense, the assertions made by Durch and Scheare were probably accurate, but the problem was that this aforementioned authorization to use force was obviously more of a guideline than an explicit order. The UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia were not a classic combat force; the other side of the coin was that the existing possibility of going beyond this framework was not exploited.

The Mandate of UN Peacekeeping Forces in Croatia, 1992-1995

The UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia were established on the basis of the UN Security Council Resolution of 21 February 1992. The first designation for it was United Nations Protection Force – UNPROFOR.⁶⁰ In March 1995, as a result of new political circumstances, the designation was changed in line with the new designation for entire peace operation: United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia – UNCRO.⁶¹ Their tasks were stipulated first and foremost by the Vance Plan. Here it was specified that the peacekeeping forces would ensure the demilitarization of the UNPAs and safeguard the remaining civilian population, oversee the work of local police forces and render support to the return of displaced persons and refugees.

⁵⁸ Cf. Davor Marijan, "Hrvatsko ratište 1990.-1995.", in: Dražen Budiša, ed., *Stvaranje hrvatske države i Domovinski rat*, (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest and Školska knjiga, 2006), 164; Miroslav Međimorec, "Medački džep – prijepori", *National Security and the Future*, 5 (2004), no. 1: 7-305.

⁵⁹ M. Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks*, p. 259.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, Document no. 531, Formation of UNPROFOR (Resolution 743), 21 February 1992, pp. 564-566.

⁶¹ Vladimir Drobnjak, "Priznanje imena i teritorijalne cjelovitosti Hrvatske u Ujedinjenim narodima kroz razdoblja djelovanja UN-a na teritoriju Republike Hrvatske", *Zbornik Diplomatske akademije (ZDI)*, 2 (1997), no. 2: 127.

During 1992, the initial mandate of the peacekeeping forces was expanded considerably. First, under UN Security Council Resolution 762 of 30 June 1992, the jurisdiction of the peacekeeping forces was enlarged to encompass areas outside of the agreed UNPA boundaries which were, with a few minor exceptions, generally under the control of the JNA and the Serbian rebels. These areas were called 'pink zones', and the UN peacekeepers in them had the same mission as those in the UNPAs. In August 1992, the Security Council adopted Resolution 769, whereby the UN peacekeeping forces assumed control of passenger and freight traffic at the borders between the UNPAs and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. UN Security Council Resolution 779 of October 1992 called for the UNPROFOR to assume the supervision of the JNA's withdrawal from and the demilitarization of the Prevlaka Peninsula. In November 1992, as part of enforcement of a military no-flight zone above Bosnia-Herzegovina, UNPROFOR military monitors were deployed with the task of overseeing airports in Croatia.⁶² The content of the UN peacekeeping mandate remained the same over the course of 1993. During 1994, the Croatian authorities and the rebel Serbs concluded agreements on a ceasefire and the normalization of economic relations (December 1994), in which the UNPROFOR participated exclusively as a provider of good services (securing channels of communication). Upon their conclusion, the UNPROFOR assumed the task of overseeing their implementation, but even this did not entail an expansion of the responsibilities assumed under the Vance Plan, for this was essentially a mere expansion of their monitoring/supervisory duties. For example, pursuant to the ceasefire agreement of March 1994, the UNPROFOR was supposed to establish full control over the newly-established buffer zone (demilitarization, establishment of checkpoints, patrolling and supervision of police activities).⁶³ Pursuant to the economic agreement of December 1994, the UNPROFOR, among other things, was tasked with supervision of passenger traffic on the Zagreb-Belgrade motorway which, again, did not exceed the extent of the security responsibilities assumed under the Vance Plan. The establishment of the UNCRO in March 1995 only emphasized the earlier mandates even more, particularly those concerning control and supervision of Croatia's borders.⁶⁴ A major organizational change occurred in October 1993, when separate UNPROFOR command headquarters were established for Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.⁶⁵ However, besides separating the until then unified UN peacekeeping force mandate into three distinct operations, there was no change to the content of their mission. The establishment of the UNCRO stressed even more that the peacekeeping operation was proceeding within Croatia's borders, but the UNPROFOR's successor did not have any

⁶² *The United Nations*, pp. 4., 7.

⁶³ "Sporazum o prekidu vatre", *Večernji list*, 31 March 1994.

⁶⁴ V. Drobnyak, "Priznanje", p. 128.

⁶⁵ *The United Nations*, pp. 219.-222.

different operative tasks. The UN peacekeeping operation in Croatia over the entire period under observation could thus be assessed as an operation to implement the somewhat modified Vance Plan.

Blue Helmets, or Some Other Features of the UN Forces in Croatia

The UN peacekeeping forces consisted of military, military-monitoring and civilian components, which applied to both the UNPROFOR and UNCRO. The most numerous were the members of the military component, in which the basic organizational unit was the infantry battalion. The deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia was completed by the end of June 1992. Infantry battalions from Belgium/Luxembourg and Russia were posted in Sector East, infantry battalions from Canada, Argentina, Nepal and Jordan were posted in Sector West, infantry battalions from Denmark, Nigeria and Poland were posted in Sector North, while infantry battalions from the Czech Republic, France and Kenya were posted in Sector South. Small logistics, engineering, construction and medical units, as well as other peace mission support staff, were deployed with them.⁶⁶ In March 1995, the status was rather different, for only Sector East did not see any changes in the UN peacekeeping battalions. The Canadian battalion was transferred from Sector West to Sector South (in 1993), Jordanian and Ukrainian infantry battalions were deployed in Sector North to replace the Nigerians, while in Sector South, in addition to the aforementioned Canadian infantry battalion, another Jordanian battalion was deployed to replace the French. At that point, there were almost sixteen thousand UN peacekeeping troops in Croatia.⁶⁷ Only the UN peacekeepers could be said to have signified, in the fullest sense of the word, the presence of the international community in Croatia. The arrival of such a large number of people constituted an entirely new experience for Croatia. Local Croatian officials had to deal with the fact that there would be confrontations between such different cultures, languages, faiths, traditions and customs. So the practical consequences of such diversity were inevitable. "If, for example, you make a sausage" – it was noted – "in which you mix ground pork and beef, you can't give it to either a Jordanian or a Nepalese, since the former don't eat pork, while the latter don't eat beef".⁶⁸

The success of traditional peacekeeping operations has always depended upon, among other things, the authority and credibility of the UN peacekeeping

⁶⁶ UNDOC, S/24353, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 762 (1992), 27 July 1992, UNPROFOR Deployment as of July 1992.

⁶⁷ UNDOC S/1995/222, Report of the Security-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 947 (1994), 22 March 1995, UNPROFOR Deployment as of March 1995.

⁶⁸ Slavica Bakić, "Daruvarski sporazum' razbjesnio je drugu stranu!", *Glas Slavonije*, 7 March 1994.

troops. For their very presence in easily recognizable uniforms with blue helmets, prominent insignia of the organization they represent and the visible bearing of arms were supposed to considerably blunt the radical behaviour of the conflicting sides. In their actions, members of the UN peacekeeping forces therefore had to merge the qualities of military demeanour and the moral integrity of a neutral peacekeeper. Impartiality in conduct and performance of duties was paramount. Members of the UN peacekeeping forces at all levels of command and at all levels of engagement had to comport themselves impartially, and had to be perceived as such.⁶⁹ Members of the UN peacekeeping forces had to approach their tasks “without apportioning blame, judging standpoints or favouring either side”.⁷⁰ Assuming the role of arbiter or even delving into the merits of a dispute were expressly prohibited.⁷¹ Even so, it was precisely in this area that the UN peacekeepers demonstrated their greatest weakness. Particularly devastating was the fact that the tendency of discarding neutrality occurred in the highest UN administrative structures. In general, the loss of neutrality to the benefit of taking pro-Serbian positions was very widespread. Marrack Goulding may rightfully be deemed the standard-bearer of such tendencies. His claim that the Republic of Croatia as mentioned in UN documents was only a geographic term often served as confirmation of this.⁷² New documents only reinforce such assessments. At the end of January 1992, he thus told Milan Babić that “they should not refer to the territory of the RS [Republic of Serbian] Krajina as the territory of the R. [Republic of] Croatia”; although he noted that this would be difficult for Zagreb to accept, he added that he did not think “that this could not be resolved”.⁷³ Goulding’s words may not have been accompanied by specific action and they were probably in the service of the wider British strategy for dealing with the conflict in the former Yugoslavia by courting favour with Belgrade, but they certainly enhanced the already existing aspirations of the so-called RSK to secede from Croatia which, obviously, did not comply with the international community’s official policy. By the same token, it is not difficult to imagine their influence on the conduct of the UN peace mission.

The Russian infantry battalion, as already stated, was deployed in Sector East, the border zone between Croatia and Serbia. At the end of March 1993, the commander of the Russian battalion at the time, General Yuri Sosedov, told the BBC that the training centre for the paramilitary commanded by

⁶⁹ *Peacekeeper’s Handbook* (Elmsford, NY, 1984), p. 377.

⁷⁰ Nina Vajić, “Mirovne operacije Ujedinjenih naroda – plavi šljemovi”, *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu*, Zagreb, 41 (1991), no. 6: 548.

⁷¹ Biljana Đurđević, “Oči i uši’ UNPROFOR-a”, *Vojska*, 10 March 1993.

⁷² G.-H. Ahrens, *Diplomacy*, p. 515.

⁷³ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 65, Report of the JNA 9th Corps Command, 2nd Military District, on the meeting between Milan Babić and UN envoy Marrack Goulding and the positions taken, 28 February 1992, III: p. 168.

Željko 'Arkan' Ražnjatović in that sector was nothing more than "a training centre at which young recruits pass through and then go to other regions" and that "it has no influence on the situation in that part of the Sector".⁷⁴ In October 1994, an official inquiry into RUSBAT's activities was conducted, and the findings indicated that its troops were involved in "black market speculation, associating with war criminals, running of brothels, and firing mortar shells at civilians".⁷⁵ The deployment of RUSBAT to the border with Serbia, which was believed to enjoy open Russian sympathy, was then noted as an mistaken decision by the Security Council.⁷⁶

Besides political pragmatism, a major source of undermining the principle of neutrality, again to Serbian benefit, was the view of those members of the UN peacekeeping mission who believed that communist Yugoslavia was simply an outstanding political and strategic project. According to the first UNPROFOR commander in Croatia, Satish Nambiar of India, a powerful Yugoslav state constituted, within the context of the end of communism in Eastern Europe, a potential threat to the political ambitions of Western Europe headed by a reunified Germany. Consequently, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy and even the Vatican encouraged the nationalist-secessionist tendencies of the Slovenes and Croats, which again provoked the justified Serbian belief that they were in fact the greatest victims of this new German conspiracy in the Balkans.⁷⁷ The new states in south-east Europe therefore upset some sort of desired geopolitical balance. The logical consequence of such views had to be an acute sensitivity to the political objectives of the rebel Serbs in Croatia.

Certain other factors also impeded the maintenance of a neutral stance. Since most of the peacekeepers were deployed in the territory under rebel Serb control, it was impossible to avoid a certain identification with their views. According to one of the peacekeeping force commanders, Jean Cot, the UNPROFOR in the manner obtained the opportunity to become familiar with the mentality of the Serbs.⁷⁸ Finally, the ambiguities in the peacekeeping

⁷⁴ MVPEIRH, VRH/National UNPROFOR Commission (DKUNPF), Class.: 004-01/93-01/01, Ref. no. 50303-93-9, Protest of 25 March 1993.

⁷⁵ *Dokumenti, Prilozi*, Bill Gertz, "UN traži povlačenje ruskih trupa zbog zločina u Hrvatskoj", *Washington Times*, 20 October 1994, p. 152.

⁷⁶ Susan R. Lamb, "The UN Protection Force in Former Yugoslavia", in: Ramesh Thakur, Carlyle A. Thayer, eds., *A Crisis of Expectations. UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s*, (London: Westview Press, 1995), p. 69.

⁷⁷ Satish Nambiar, "UN peacekeeping operations in former Yugoslavia – from UNPROFOR to Kosovo", *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Ad Hoc Missions, Permanent Engagement* (Ramesh Thakur, Albrecht Schnabel, eds.) (New York: United Nations University Press, 2001), pp. 169-170.

⁷⁸ Croatian Ministry of Defence (MORH), Zagreb, Central Military Archives (SVA), Croatian Army Main Staff (GSHV), UNPROFOR and the European Community Monitoring Mission Liaison Office (UUNPFPMEZ), Osijek Departmental Office (OUO), Class: 81/93-01/91, Ref. no. 1076-18-93-483, Extraordinary report of 7 December 1993.

mandate – visible from the very start – were also essential. As early as February 1992, the Canadian commander of the preceding peace mission, John Wilson, told a television station in Belgrade that the primary task of the UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia would be there to protect the local Serbs.⁷⁹ Wilson's awkward statement, which was immediately denied, reflected the very roots of the Vance Plan, which implicitly contained the tendency of pro-Serbian clientelism. The problem of maintaining neutrality may not have been as notable had something of a balance of favouritism had been established. However, available sources do not confirm this assumption. The rebel Serbs, for example, believed the Argentine battalion posted in Sector West openly favoured the Croatian side. In August 1993, ARGBAT was proclaimed undesirable in the territory of the RSK.⁸⁰ The Argentines did in fact inform the Croatian side that "the outlook of the Argentine person is very similar to that of the Croats" and that they were cognizant "of the struggle of the Croats against the socialist regime".⁸¹ However, their conduct was in no way comparable to that of – for example – RUSBAT.

It would nevertheless be mistaken to consider pro-Serbian clientelism the most important determinant of the operations of the UN peacekeepers in Croatia, although its influence can neither be underestimated. However, a high number of clearly apparent improvisations, fumbling and a notable affinity for bureaucratism in approaches resulted from a lack of knowledge and lack of familiarity with the basic facts of the deployment region, shoddy preparation, inadequate resources, insufficient discipline and gradual acceptance of a conformist position. Ignorance was widespread at all levels. Goulding himself acknowledged that he had only a vague grasp of the complexity of ethnic relations in Yugoslavia.⁸² It was therefore not surprising that this ignorance often assumed alarming features at lower decision-making levels. In February 1995, after almost three years of experience, a Nepalese officer at a bridge crossing near Stara Gradiška "asked on which side of the Sava River Croatia is located".⁸³ This ignorance was due to a shocking lack of preparation. Even the proverbially well-prepared Canadians, after receiving deployment orders, did not have any maps of Yugoslavia at their disposal.⁸⁴ The discrepancies in quality between the

⁷⁹ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, UN/United Nations Mission of Liaison Officers (UNM-LO), Statement of John Wilson of 24 February 1992.

⁸⁰ Croatian Memorial Documentation Centre (HMDCDR), Zagreb, Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK), 18th Corps of the Serbian Army of Krajina (SVK)/Command (K18.k), Inv. no. 18-802, Protest letter of 30 August 1993.

⁸¹ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, Civilian Affairs Coordinator for Sector West (KCSZ), Report from the meeting of the police, Croatian Army representatives and the Sector West Civilian Affairs Coordinator with ARGBAT commander Lt. Col. Bendini of 31 August 1993.

⁸² M. Goulding, *Peacemonger*, p. 299.

⁸³ V. H., "Gdje je Hrvatska?", *Glas Slavonije*, 27 February 1995.

⁸⁴ Sean M. Maloney, John Llamb, eds., *Chances for Peace: Canadian Soldiers in the Balkans 1992-1995. An Oral History* (Ontario: St. Catharines, 2002), p. 25.

UN peacekeeping infantry battalions was also striking. The Canadians were appalled at the level of gear used by NEPBAT, such as, for example, the absence of suitable winter attire.⁸⁵ Croatian observers found NIGBAT's organization of checkpoints in Sector North amateurish in comparison to that of the Danes.⁸⁶ To the French in Sector South, the Kenyan battalion did not even leave the impression of a respectable military formation: they spent most of their time sleeping, and did not even bother to set up an effective patrol system.⁸⁷ While poor equipment was a characteristic of the battalions from largely underdeveloped Asian and African countries, a lack of discipline characterized them all. Alcoholism, provocation of physical altercations, prostitution, illicit drug consumption and involvement in smuggling were widespread phenomena. For example, a UN special investigative commission ascertained at the end of the 1993 that, among other things, "there is firm evidence that the UNPROFOR has smuggled fuel, primarily in UNPA Sectors South and North".⁸⁸ The operation of motor vehicles while intoxicated in particular left a poor impression. An UNCRO police officer perpetrated several consecutive traffic infractions in Vinkovci in mid-July 1995 while under the obvious influence of alcohol; since he refused to stop even after repeated calls to do so, he had to be forced to comply.⁸⁹ The Slovak engineering unit troops were the most candid; they told a Croatian interlocutor that participation in the peacekeeping mission was an ideal opportunity for career advancement and high earnings, particularly since the UN covered most of their expenses.⁹⁰ Such conduct undoubtedly cost the peacekeeping forces a considerable loss of integrity.

The UN soldier was precisely the individual with whom local residents most often made contact. So the success of any peacekeeping mission depends on how successfully such a soldier brings together military professionalism and an authentic concern for the needs of the local civilian population. The UN peacekeeper therefore has to exude a commitment to the success of the peacekeeping mission, ambassadorial comportment, professorial restraint and

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸⁶ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, MORH/GSHV/Karlovac Operational Zone Command (ZZPK), Class.: 8/93-01/250, Ref. no.: 1078-01/1-90-1, Notice on organization of UN checkpoints and monitoring points of 23 August 1993.

⁸⁷ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, MORH/GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/Sector South Department (OSJ), Report of 1 December 1992.

⁸⁸ MVPEIRH, Multilateral Administration (UML)/Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations (SMRHUN), no. 61-01/94, Note on the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Counter-legal Conduct of the UNPROFOR of 26 January 1994.

⁸⁹ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ/Croatian Ministry of Interior, Zagreb (MUPRH)/Police Sector (SP), no. 511-01-10/1-758-14-36086/95 FP, Notice of 17 July 1995.

⁹⁰ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Liaison officer for Šibenik, Extraordinary report of 27 January 1993.

professional military bearing in equal parts.⁹¹ The impressions left by the UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia often fell short of this framework.

The UNPROFOR and the Demilitarization of the Protected Zones

By far the most important provisions of the Vance Plan dealt with demilitarization of the areas under UN protection. All armed forces in them had to either withdraw or disband, and the task of the UN peacekeeping forces was to see that such areas remained demilitarized. Their arms had to be removed from the UNPAs either during withdrawal of the JNA and Croatian forces or turned over to the UN peacekeepers. Closely tied to this, all regular military units in the UNPAs had to be decommissioned, while all paramilitary or volunteer forces had to either withdraw from the UNPAs or disband. The bearing of sidearms was permitted only for local police officers.⁹² Demilitarization meant that at the moment the peacekeepers assumed responsibility, there could be no uniformed soldiers nor armed civilians in the UNPAs. Thereafter, in the words of Argentine Luis Lagos, insofar “as we find anyone with arms without an UNPROFOR permit, they would be seized”.⁹³ The successful demilitarization of the UN protected areas was supposed to prevent the renewed outbreak of war, which was a key prerequisite for implementation of the remaining tasks entrusted to the peacekeeping forces.

The prospects for successful demilitarization of the future UN protected areas were crucially undermined even before the UN peacekeeping forces assumed responsibility for them. The first obstacle was set up by the JNA. Based on the Vance’s negotiation efforts from early 1992, it was obliged to withdraw from the territory of the Republic of Croatia. In the following months it largely did so, but at the same time it organized the military forces of the rebel Serbs, i.e., the Territorial Defence (TO) units and militia units, supplying them with arms and other military *matériel*. It also organized the staff of these forces along similar lines. Up to early June 1992, increasingly larger JNA units were withdrawn from Croatia’s territory, but over two hundred tanks and several thousand artillery pieces of varying calibre, among other things, were left behind for the rebel Serbs.⁹⁴ To be sure, most members of the rebel Serb TO were decommissioned, but it was foreseen that after the UN peacekeeping forces assumed their responsibility, they would operate at the level of command staffs (peacetime organization). For example, in early May 1992, TO units in western and eastern Slavonia were disbanded, and they were ordered to turn over their weapons, but in a manner “that each soldier knew

⁹¹ Michael O’Connor, “Policing the Peace”, *United Nations Peacekeeping*, p. 65.

⁹² *Ujedinjeni narodi. Rezolucije, Vanceov plan*, pp. 70, 73-75.

⁹³ Tanja Božić, Diana Šetka, “Povratak pod kapom UNPROFOR-a”, *Arena*, 25 July 1992.

⁹⁴ D. Marijan, *Slom*, pp. 393-400.

where his arms were located”.⁹⁵ The disbanding of the TO units was therefore only temporary in character, as the decommissioned members could again be called to active service, and their arms were at their disposal. By contrast, the militia (police) units, which were permitted under the Vance Plan, continued to function after their reorganization in February and March 1992. Even so, already in early 1992, within the scope of the RSK internal affairs system, the Special Militia Units (PJM) began to be formed, and these – within the context of the decommissioning of the TO – assumed the tasks of a classic military force.⁹⁶ The reinforcement of the military and militia forces of the rebel Serbs in terms of arms and personnel, the superficial disbanding of the TO units and the organization of the PJM brigades were facts well known to the UN. Boutros-Ghali’s report to the UN Security Council in June 1992 stated that the high number of Serbian irregular forces were obviously “absorbed into the local territorial defence, while in individual cases they were also taken in by the police in the UNPAs”, which was preceded by a JNA decision “that a majority portion of these arms, including heavy weapons, be assigned to these forces prior to withdrawal from the UNPAs”.⁹⁷ The lack of a decisive response to the undermining of one of the most important provisions of the Vance Plan would later have immense repercussions.

From May to July 1992, UN peacekeepers assumed responsibility in all four protected areas. Once this responsibility was assumed, the UNPROFOR mediated in the refinement of the agreements which foresaw the gradual demilitarization of individual sectors. Besides belief in the cooperation of both sides, which mostly pertained to the Serbian side – for besides a part of Sector West the remaining sectors largely corresponded to the extent of Serbian conquest in 1991 – the UNPROFOR had no other assurances at its disposal. The extent of Serbian obstruction of the demilitarization process was patently apparent. At the beginning of November 1992, the general assessment in Sector East was that there were concealed weapons everywhere, and the UNPROFOR was unable to search the entire territory of this sector. In Sectors North and South, the disarming of paramilitary groups had still not commenced.⁹⁸ Demilitarization went the farthest in Sector West, so by the end of June 1992 Croatian forces were withdrawn from it, while in early July the Serbian TO

⁹⁵ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 209, Command of the Main Staff of the TO RSK to the Zone Staff of the West Slavonia TO and the Zone Staff of the East Slavonia TO on the dissolution of existing and formation of new command staffs and Territorial Defence units of the RSK and the turnover of command zones to the militia forces of the RSK and UNPROFOR dated 7 May 1992, III: p. 457.

⁹⁶ N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, pp. 348-349.

⁹⁷ *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, Document no. 539, Report of Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to the Security Council of 15 June 1992, III: p. 592.

⁹⁸ Croatian State Archives (HDA), Zagreb, Office of the Croatian President (UPRH), Technical Unit (TJ) 322, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, Class.: 800-01-92-01/05, Ref. no: 5030107-92-108, Report on the status of and some issues concerning peacekeeping operations of 3 November 1992.

had largely been decommissioned.⁹⁹ A relative success was achieved when the heavy artillery and other arms of the Serbian TO was withdrawn to depots. It was placed in storage in Sectors East, West and North in early November 1992, while in Sector South it was only pulled back from the former frontline. Heavy arms were placed under “double lock and key”, i.e. one key was held by the relevant UNPROFOR commander, while the other by the counterpart Serbian TO commander.¹⁰⁰

The first mandate of the UN peacekeeping forces expired in the first half of February 1993. By that time, the basic weaknesses of the Vance Plan crystallized where this pertained to the demilitarization of the protected areas. First, the rebel Serbs obviously did not intend to turn over all arms to UN forces, nor disband all units not permitted under the Vance Plan. In this regard, the greatest threat was posed by their special militia units. In Boutros-Ghali’s report to the Security Council in October 1992, it was noted that the root of the deteriorating situation in the UNPAs was the decision of the authorities in Knin “to create new paramilitary forces”, which was a “brutal violation of the UN peace plan”.¹⁰¹ The aforementioned paramilitaries were the RSK special militia units (PJM brigade). For example, after being warned by the Belgians that his unit had to be disarmed and dissolved by the end of July 1992, the PJM commander in Beli Manastir reported to his superiors in Knin that he would not “comply with the demand of the UNPROFOR Command, even at the cost of resorting to the force of arms”.¹⁰² Even regular militia units refused to turn over their sidearms.¹⁰³ A considerable quantity of heavy arms were also concealed outside of the official depots. At the end of July 1992, there were four such secret depots in the Benkovac area; in one of them, the rebel Serbs hid an entire battery of mortars with projectiles and vehicles, while their crews were on constant combat alert.¹⁰⁴ In the part of Sector West under Croatian control, the UNPROFOR also sent several protests to the Croatian police authorities

⁹⁹ HMDCCR, RSK, Western Slavonia Territorial Defence Zone Staff (ZŠTOZS), Press information of 3 July 1992.

¹⁰⁰ HDA, UPRH/TJ 322, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, Class.: 800-01-92-01/05, Ref. no.: 5030107-92-108, Report on the status of and some issues concerning peacekeeping operations of 3 November 1992.

¹⁰¹ HDA, UPRH/Archives (P)/Folder (F) 349, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations (SMRHUN), Analysis of all resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, dated 23 October 1992.

¹⁰² HMDCCR, RSK, MUP/Special Militia Unit Command in Beli Manastir, Conf. no. 4-2, Report on the critical situation between PJM command and UNPROFOR, dated 27 July 1992.

¹⁰³ M. Rupiċ, ed., *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat* (Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2009). Document no. 59, Letter from the UN Civilian Affairs Administrator to the RSK Defence Ministry on carrying and storing of arms, dated 23 July 1992, V: pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁴ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 68, Report on the storage of arms, equipment and matériel, dated 31 July 1992, V: p. 117.

due to the carrying of infantry rifles, particularly in the Pakrac-Lipik area.¹⁰⁵ In Sector East, after it became obvious that the UNPROFOR would not use force to seize the arms of the local militia, the Croatian Army simply refused to withdraw to the specified line five kilometres from the boundary of the UNPA.¹⁰⁶ The period under observation allowed for a conclusion as to how far the UN peacekeeping forces were prepared to go in disarmament campaigns. One of Nambiar's statements made in April 1992 should have served as sufficient warning. When asked by a Croatian journalist if he was prepared to order his troops to take decisive action in the seizure of arms, insofar as this problem arose, his response was: "May I answer that question when this need arises?"¹⁰⁷ The UNPROFOR did not have an effective response when this need actually arose several months later. The most common method was to warn the rebel Serbs that refusal to disarm was an open violation of the Vance Plan and prevention of its implementation. The military officers of the rebel Serb were thus warned that the UNPROFOR knew of "a high number of people who wore the uniforms of the JNA, then the uniforms of the TO, and now wear the uniforms of the so-called militia" and they were implored not to transform the "UN protected zone in a 'police state'".¹⁰⁸ Some more decisive steps were also taken. In Sector East, RUSBAT blockaded several militia stations, but the Serbs refused to turn over their arms; further action was halted by Nambiar based on assurances he had allegedly received from Knin.¹⁰⁹ In Sector West in October and November 1992, the Canadians were involved "in a series of cordons and searches of Serbian militia stations".¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, after intervention from Knin and a demonstrative muster of militia troops in Okučani, even the Canadians backed down. Instead, both sides were offered a ten-day amnesty (15 to 25 December 1992), but only in the wider Pakrac environs, in which they could turn over their arms or remove them from the UNPA.¹¹¹ No sanctions were foreseen in case of refusal to comply. It may be concluded that some arms were seized in these and similar campaigns, but it was obvious that the latter

¹⁰⁵ Croatian Interior Ministry (MUPRH), Zagreb, Bjelovar-Bilogora Police Administration (PUBB)/Operational Action for Return (OAP), Report of the Pakrac Police Station, dated 11 July 1992.

¹⁰⁶ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/Osijek Operational Zone Command (ZOZO), Class.: 035-01/92-01/05, Ref. no: 1076-01-34-92-09, Extraordinary report of 6 August 1992.

¹⁰⁷ P. Š., "UNPROFOR po planu", *Večernji list*, 2 April 1992.

¹⁰⁸ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 80, Response to UNPROFOR – Sector North Command to RSK Defence Minister Stojan Španović on tensions in the field and differing interpretations of the UNPROFOR mandate by his command and RSK authorities, dated 8 August 1992, V: pp. 135-136.

¹⁰⁹ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/ZOZO, Class.: 035-01/92-01/05, Ref. no.: 1076-01-34-92-06, Extraordinary report of 31 July 1992.

¹¹⁰ HMDCDR, RSK, ZŠTOZS, No.: 183-14, Letter to CANBAT of 1 December 1992.

¹¹¹ MUPRH, PUBB/OAP, Letter from the Canadian battalion commander 1 of 2 December 1992.

were more demonstrative in character; after all, none of them were conceived as permanent. The key problem consisted of the fact that the peacekeeping forces could not vouchsafe anything, not even for those successes in demilitarization that were only secured after great difficulty. In early November 1992 the tensions in Sector North were seething, and the UNPROFOR commander could barely manage to halt Serb attempts to break into arms depots.¹¹²

Nobody, however, could have predicted that this unsatisfactory result by the UNPROFOR in the demilitarization of the protected zones during the peacekeeping force's first mandate, which expired in the latter half of February 1993, would prove to be their best capability in this sense. For in the latter half of January 1993, Croatian forces liberated the wider Novigrad environs, parts of the Zadar hinterland and the area of the Peruča Dam.¹¹³ The response of the rebel Serbs was predictable; in Sectors East, North and South they broke into the common weapons depots and seized the heavy weaponry. In Sector East, about thirty Serbian tanks were demonstratively placed on the UNPA boundary, occupying the Bijelo Brdo-Sarvaš line; "When asked how they conceived of their 'double key' obligation, the members of UNPROFOR's RUSBAT responded that the principle is sound, but the 'lock' is faulty".¹¹⁴ In Sector North, the Serbs mobilized their units, seized the arms from joint depots and occupied positions along the UNPA boundaries.¹¹⁵ The opinion of the commander of UNPROFOR's Czech infantry battalion in May 1993 was that in Lika the conditions for implementation of demilitarization did not exist.¹¹⁶ The only sector in which they did not break into the joint arms depots was West; but even here this depended on special assurances given to them by the UNPROFOR commander and the refusal of a local TO commander to obey orders from Knin.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, there was a general mobilization of TO troops, and they were armed with infantry rifles and they took up defensive positions.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the UNPROFOR troops themselves were placed in jeopardy. For example, the Kenyan battalion was "in total disarray", and its commander in mortal danger; he could not return to Benkovac and limited himself to the grounds of an UNPROFOR station "like an ordinary soldier so he could be

¹¹² MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/Department for Sector North (OSS), Class.: 804-01/92-02/07, Ref. no: 2133-01-92-06, Notes from the meeting held on 10 November 1992 of 12 November 1992.

¹¹³ D. Marijan, "Hrvatsko ratište", pp. 159-162.

¹¹⁴ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO, Class.: 81/93-02/01, Ref. no.: 1076-18-93-29, Extraordinary report of 23 January 1993.

¹¹⁵ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSS, Class.: 035-08/93-01/01, Ref. no.: 1078-08/1-93-19, Regular report for 31 Jan. 1993 dated 31 January 1993.

¹¹⁶ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Lika, Report of 13 May 1993.

¹¹⁷ MORH, SVA, GSHV, Report of Croatian Air Force and Anti-aircraft Defence Commander to the Croatian President dated 12 February 1993.

¹¹⁸ HMDCCR, RSK/SVK, 51st Infantry Brigade Command, Confidential no.: 45-1, Operational report of 1 February 1993.

more easily concealed".¹¹⁹ According to the UN peacekeeping force commander, Frenchman Jean Cot, the Croatian military operation in January 1993 was the UNPROFOR's 'Battle of Trafalgar' in Croatia; the Serbs became fully armed, and thus rendered the Vance Plan unworkable.¹²⁰ In this situation, UNPROFOR oriented its operations to what it could accomplish; for example, in Sector South they mediated a considerable number of ceasefires.¹²¹ Some more decisive actions aimed at demilitarization were taken by the Canadians and Argentines in Sector West, but, as during 1992, they were limited both in terms of time and space. For example, during September 1993, the Argentines managed to take some weapons from the Serbs in the Pakrac area, but already at the beginning of the next month the members of the 'Serbian Army of Krajina' (SVK) once more took possession of recently abandoned positions.¹²² So during 1993, all of the successes in demilitarization of the protected areas from the UNPROFOR's first mandate were voided, the rebel Serbs in the UNPAs were armed as in early 1992, and Croatian dissatisfaction with implementation of this most vital aspect of the Vance Plan became even more pronounced. Even Nambiar's admission that the Croatian military operation in January 1993 was an understandable consequence of Serbian obstruction could not conceal this failure.

The easing of tensions, the negotiation of a ceasefire agreement and the establishment of economic ties, their implementation and an attempt to find a permanent solution to the conflict were events which marked the political-security situation up to the end of 1993 to the spring of 1995. As already noted, the UN peacekeepers had directed their efforts to the physical separation of the sides in the conflict, i.e., to securing a buffer zone, as foreseen under the ceasefire agreement of March 1994. The latter was supposed to fully demilitarize the territory "under the exclusive control of UNPROFOR", for in them there "will be no paramilitary, police nor military personnel of either side".¹²³ The territories of the protected areas were expanded to include the 'pink zones'; the position of the UNPROFOR command was that after the agreement was signed, "it had become irrelevant to speak of pink zones as some sort of political term", for under the new circumstances, importance was accorded "solely to the buffer zone between the two side".¹²⁴ The available data point to the fact that despite

¹¹⁹ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Liaison officer in Šibenik, Extraordinary report of 1 February 1993.

¹²⁰ Barbara Ekwall-Uebelhart, "Disarmament Operations in Croatia", *Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project. Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1996), p. 43.

¹²¹ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Zadar, Regular report dated 26 October 1993.

¹²² HMDCDR, RSK/SVK, 59th Squad Command, Strictly confidential no: 465-1, Regular combat report of 1-2 October 1993.

¹²³ "Sporazum o prekidu vatre", *Večernji list*, 31 March 1993.

¹²⁴ HDA, UPRH/P/F 684, SMRHUN, No. 32-08/94, Notes on the meeting with Bertrand de la Presle, UNPROFOR Supreme Commander, 11 August 1994.

the signed ceasefire agreement, nothing significant changed in the conduct of the rebel Serbs. In Sector East, the withdrawal of heavy arms was subject to prevarication, they refused to clear land-mines from the line of separation, and considerable forces were amassed in Darda.¹²⁵ According to UN military monitors, in January 1995 the Croatian side fully complied with the ceasefire agreement, while the Serbian side entirely prohibited them from carrying out any patrols, which was an obvious sign of obstruction.¹²⁶ The principal features of implementation of the ceasefire agreement in Sector North in September 1994 were: the Serbs removed weapons from depots and hid them; their militia units constantly moved into the buffer zone; and they stubbornly refused to clear land-mines from the separation line.¹²⁷ The situation in Sector South resembled a virtual state of war, with absolutely no possibility of effective supervision of the buffer zone by UN peacekeepers. In the latter half of June 1994, they seized the village of Kakma in the buffer zone.¹²⁸ In July 1994, they attempted to militarily take the strategically vital point Debelo Brdo, but were repelled.¹²⁹ Under such circumstances, particularly in the latter half of 1994 and early 1995, even the little remaining Croatian willingness to cooperate had disappeared. When a UN civilian police team intended to conduct a scheduled inspection of a police station in Pakrac in January 1995, they were told that “the agreement is no longer valid and that the proposed inspection cannot be allowed.”¹³⁰ The situation assumed the contours of a turning point.

The UNPROFOR and Safety in the Protected Areas

The concept of the UN protected area also implied ensuring a situation in which the entire civilian population in them had to be safe from armed attacks and other forms of intimidation or potential expulsion. The protection and safety of civilians in the UNPAs were among the set of tasks for all components of the UN peacekeeping force, and particular emphasis was placed on the members of the United Nations Civilian Police (UNCIVPOL). They were supposed to oversee the work of local police units, investigate any complaints of discrimination and other violations of human rights and report thereon to

¹²⁵ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO, Report of 11 May 1994.

¹²⁶ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO, Class.: 81/95-02/01, Ref. no.: 1076-15-95-04, Extraordinary report of 4 January 1995.

¹²⁷ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSS/Liaison officer in Sisak, Information on violations of the Ceasefire Agreement of 29 March 1994, dated 28 September 1994.

¹²⁸ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Zadar, Report of the meeting of the joint commission on 30 June 1994.

¹²⁹ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Sinj, Report of 13 July 1994.

¹³⁰ MUPRH, PUBB/OAP, no. 511-02-01-6/88-95, Protest letter from UNPROFOR dated 12 January 1995.

the peacekeeping force commander.¹³¹ However, it became apparent that in the period under observation the RSK authorities continued to carry out the ethnic cleansing which had already begun in the summer of 1991. The Croatian and other non-Serbian residents in the RSK territory were subject to an entire series of repressive measures, from murder, physical abuse, looting and destruction of personal property, surveillance and tracking, to expulsion. In early 1994, the total number of Croats in RSK territory was limited to a negligible minority compared to the situation prior to the conflict.¹³² In other words, the persecution of the non-Serbian population in Croatia's occupied territories, which began in mid-1991, continued even after the deployment of the peacekeeping troops and their assumption of control in the protected areas.

The high number of repressive measures implemented by the RSK authorities has already been analyzed in the scholarly literature, but it would nonetheless be informative to cite several examples here. Throughout the period under observation, Sector East was the focal point of brutal repression against the non-Serbian population. For example, in late May 1992, 180 Croats were expelled from Čakovci, Cerić and Mikluševci.¹³³ Over the following days, the expulsion of Croats and other non-Serbs was carried out elsewhere, such as Tovarnik, for example.¹³⁴ The murder of a high number of non-Serb civilians was also perpetrated; according to the rebel Serbs themselves, during 1992 a total of 150 people were killed in Sector East.¹³⁵ The Krajina authorities also instituted mandatory labour for non-Serbs; one member of these coercively mobilized contingents was killed in the village of Nijemci in September 1993, and this contingent consisted of Croats and Slovaks from Ilok.¹³⁶ At the end of October of that same year, the command of the Serbian forces in Baranja described the situation there in which "a new wave is rising, marked by violence, private altercations, abuse, looting of private and public property, illegal occupation of houses belonging to Croats leaving Baranja, and expulsion motivated

¹³¹ *Ujedinjeni narodi. Rezolucije*, Vance plan, pp. 72-73.

¹³² For more on this, see N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, pp. 371-391.

¹³³ M. Rupiċ, ed., *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat* (Zagreb-Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2008), Document no. 101, From the report on CIVPOL oversight in the case of expulsion of 180 Croats from the villages of Čakovci, Cerić and Mikluševci of 19 May 1992, IV: pp. 297-298.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, Document no. 104, From the report on investigations by UNPROFOR CIVPOL on expulsion of Croats from Tovarnik of 25 May 1992, IV: pp. 301-302.

¹³⁵ Mate Rupiċ, ed., *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat* (Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2009), Document no. 11, Report of SVK Main Staff Security Organ to the Yugoslav Army Security Directorate of 21 January 1993, VII: pp. 22-23.

¹³⁶ Mate Rupiċ, ed., *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat* (Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2009), Document no. 204, Report of 11th Corps Security Organ to the SVK Main Staff of 24 September 1993, IX: pp. 282-283.

by self-interest".¹³⁷ The situation was similar elsewhere. All told, these instances demonstrated that the UN peacekeepers were unable to protect the non-Serb civilian population in the territories entrusted to them to protect.

The reasons for this failure should be sought in the interplay of several factors. As in the case of demilitarization of the protected areas, the attitude of the rebel Serbs was the most important cause of the failure. Throughout the entire existence of the RSK, they persistently implemented the policy of expulsion and killing of the non-Serbian population.¹³⁸ The inefficacy of the UN peacekeepers themselves was the next reason. This had its roots in an entire series of phenomena. Namely, the effective protection of the non-Serb population under circumstances clearly marked by the orientation of the rebel Serbs toward a policy of ethnic exclusion plainly implied the necessity of using armed force. The UNPROFOR could not effectively employ force primarily due to its own lack of equipment and limited numbers, as well as the restrictions contained in its mandate. For example, in order to effectively supervise the buffer zone that was supposed to be established according to the ceasefire agreement of March 1994, the UN peacekeeping force command believed that the existing forces had to be augmented with 14 infantry battalions, 5 engineering battalions and a helicopter unit.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, as in the case of demilitarization of the protected areas, even those available possibilities were not utilized, or they were utilized in a manner that additionally increased the already growing Croatian dissatisfaction with the overall performance of the UN peacekeepers. In September 1992, after several months of persistent attempts, Croatian displaced persons from Eastern Slavonia publicly announced that – regardless of opposition by the UNPROFOR – they would begin their organized return. A procession of displaced persons arrived at the UNPROFOR checkpoint in Tenjski Antunovac on 30 September 1992, but they were halted by the members of RUSBAT.¹⁴⁰ In order to halt similar activities by displaced persons, in October 1992 the UNPROFOR was authorized to use force.¹⁴¹ There are no indications that similar authorization was granted in order to halt the expulsion of non-Serbs from that very same sector. The ineffective demilitarization of the protected areas gave the rebel Serbs effective military control over them, thus placing the remaining non-Serb population to a state of complete subjugation. The failure of demilitarization of the protected areas therefore created the context in which the rebel Serbs could continue to implement their policy

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, book 9, Document no. 269, Report of the Baranja Division Command on the security situation in the territory of Baranja, dated 28 October 1993, p. 385.

¹³⁸ N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p. 373.

¹³⁹ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPMEZ, UNPROFOR/HQZG, Reinforcements tied to ceasefire agreement of 30 March 1994.

¹⁴⁰ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/ZOZO, Class.: 035-01/92-01/05, Ref. no.: 1076-01-34-92-8, Extraordinary report of 30 September 1992.

¹⁴¹ S. Economides, M. Berdal, "Former Yugoslavia", *United Nations Interventionism*, 77.

of ethnic cleansing unimpeded. The fact that the highest command structures of the UN peacekeeping force deemed the protection of the Serbian minority in Croatia their primary task has already been pointed out. In this sense, the lack of effective protection of the non-Serb population in the protected areas may also be ascribed to this fact. In late July 1993, in response to a comment by the Croatian liaison officer that the expulsion of the remaining non-Serbs was continuing, the UN civilian affairs chief in Sector East, Francise Blondine Negga, stated that according to the Vance Plan the UN peacekeepers had “come to protect the ‘Serbian minority’ and that they had come upon a Serbian majority and a Croatian minority”.¹⁴² Negga’s statement thus reflected a substantial shortcoming of the Vance Plan. This failure led to the shifting of blame between individual components of the UN peacekeeping force. Representatives of the military and civilian components of the peace mission often pointed out that protection of civilians was the job of UNCIVPOL, while the latter’s commanders told Croatian liaison officers that they had nowhere near the necessary manpower.¹⁴³ UN peacekeepers themselves were often – and especially after January 1993 – the target of armed attacks and looting raids conducted by various Serbian armed groups.¹⁴⁴ Nothing more could probably have been expected from a protection force that was unable to effectively protect even its own members.

Responding to the constant insistence by the authorities in Zagreb tied to the remaining Croatian population in the village of Kijevo, the director of UNPROFOR Civilian Affairs, Irishman Cedric Thornberry, stated in early September 1992 that his subordinates had visited the village and delivered food aid, that UNCIVPOL had set up a system of patrolling, and that representatives of the Serbian militia had promised to conduct an investigation upon the intervention of the local civilian affairs chief, while he said that he had sought an urgent meeting with Milan Martić.¹⁴⁵ The content of Thornberry’s response was universal in nature, i.e., it roughly set down the boundaries of what the UN peacekeeping force was prepared to do, and what they generally did, with reference to protection of civilian populations in the protected areas. But this was not nearly enough, and that such actions did not succeed in compelling the rebel Serbs to cease their repression. Events in Podlapača, in the territory of the former municipality of Korenica, served to illustrate the full complexity of the UNPROFOR’s activities in the protection of non-Serbian populations. After the cessation of warfare in early 1992, a portion of the pre-war Croatian

¹⁴² MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO, Class.: 81/93-02/01, Ref. no.: 1076-18-93-?, Daily report on the Department’s work, dated 21 July 1993.

¹⁴³ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UNPFPMEZ/OUO, VRH/Civilian Affairs Coordinator for Sector East (KCSI), Class.: 910-04/94-01/15, Notes from the meeting held in Vinkovci on 1 February 1994.

¹⁴⁴ N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, 361-363.

¹⁴⁵ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, UNPROFOR/HQZG/CA, Letter from Cedric Thornberry to Zvonko Nogolica of 7 September 1992.

population continued to live in this village, about 160 in all, of whom over half were over 50 years of age.¹⁴⁶ However, they were subject to unrelenting repression, mostly in the form of looting.¹⁴⁷ In mid-June 1992, as stated, “a group of extremists [came to the village from Korenica] and with threats and brandishing weapons they began to expel the people of Croatian nationality”.¹⁴⁸ The expulsion was prevented by the joint intervention of the Serbian authorities and the Czech UNPROFOR troops.¹⁴⁹ The situation nevertheless worsened, so via UNPROFOR the residents sought supplies of food and fuel from the Croatian government.¹⁵⁰ The good will of the RSK authorities soon disappeared, an economic blockade of the local residents was set up, and the Czechs remained the sole hope of the local Croats: they organized a checkpoint in the village and, due to Serb rejections, they assumed responsibility for supplying the residents with living necessities. UNCIVPOL also undertook certain activities, such as establishing mobile patrols. The Podlapača Croats appreciated the efforts of the Czechs and UNCIVPOL to protect them, and noted that it was solely thanks to these efforts that they remained in the village. Even so, at night the situation changed, and since, as they acknowledged themselves, the Czech were subject to threats, they left the village at nightfall.¹⁵¹ This left the remaining residents at the mercy of the RSK authorities and their paramilitary groups. According to available data, in mid-1993 there were 114 people left in Podlapača, and they were being defended by 98 members of the Czech battalion.¹⁵² In September of that same year, after the Croatian operations in the Medak Pocket, the situation for the Podlapača Croats worsened. Several civilians were killed.¹⁵³ The Serbian authorities also instituted mandatory labour for these Croatian civilians.¹⁵⁴ The Serbian authorities in Korenica believed that they had to leave, and they faulted UN representatives for their allegedly exaggerated and unnecessary concern for their safety.¹⁵⁵ In the second half of 1993, even Thornberry visited Podlapača after Zagreb intervened. The reason

¹⁴⁶ Jure Karakaš, *Podlapac* (Zagreb-Gospić: Stajer graf, Lika press, 2001), p. 146.

¹⁴⁷ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 44, Report of the Udbina Militia Station to the Public Security Station in Korenica on looting of remaining Croats in Podlapača of 21 February 1992, IV: pp. 128-129.

¹⁴⁸ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 270, Report of the Lika TO Zone Staff Command to the RSK TO Main Staff Command on the incursion of Serbian extremists in the village of Podlapača of 14 June 1992, III: p. 541.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, Appeal of the residents of the village of Podlapača of 12 August 1992.

¹⁵¹ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, MORH/VP 1079-32 Rijeka, Class.: 804-01/92-03/02, Ref. no.: 1079-32-27-92-19, Information dated 30 August 1992.

¹⁵² Trajko Grkovski, “Nitko nije mogao jamčiti zaštitu”, *Vjesnik*, 21 January 1994.

¹⁵³ J. Karakaš, *Podlapac*, pp. 156, 160.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁵⁵ N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, p. 395.

was the drastically deteriorating safety in the village. According to residents, the pressure from the rebel Serbs was unsustainable: "Nobody in the village had even one rifle, and everything has been set afire, and taken away. They beat young people, they even beat old ladies".¹⁵⁶ According to the statements from Thornberry's letter, sent to the chairman of the Croatian commission in charge of relations with UNPROFOR, the people of Podlapača told him that "they no longer feel able to live in the village and they want to cross over the line of hostilities in the territory of Croatia under the control of the Croatian authorities [sic!]."¹⁵⁷ Thornberry went to Korenica immediately thereafter, but the local Serbs resolutely told him that "it was unrealistic to expect them to adhere to pledges of security".¹⁵⁸ He also intervened with Knin by writing a letter.¹⁵⁹ It is therefore obvious that the lives of the Podlapača Croats were in peril and that the UNPROFOR was no longer able to protect them, and the situation continued to deteriorate. For example, in December 1993, members of the rebel Serb militia simply seized sixty packages of humanitarian aid being carried by the Czechs for the Croats in Podlapača.¹⁶⁰ As a logical consequence of this type of life in constant danger, it came as no surprise that the local Croats expressed the desire to leave Podlapača. The first proposal was forwarded via UNPROFOR to the Croatian authorities in September 1993.¹⁶¹ In the latter half of January 1994, a total of 28 Croats from Podlapača set off from Podlapača in UNPROFOR vehicles, headed for Croatia's free territory, but they stopped at the crossing point, because suddenly they changed their minds and "began asking to return".¹⁶² According to the same source, the UNPROFOR wanted to bring over another 45 Croats even earlier, which the Croatian authorities prevented.¹⁶³ In the second half of August 1995, Croatian forces came upon a total of 98 people there.¹⁶⁴ Several facts are irrefutable. It is certain that the Podlapača Croats would have been expelled in early 1992, and more serious crimes did not occur thanks to the presence of the UN peacekeepers. The locals praised the work of the UN peacekeepers: "The UNPROFOR saved us".¹⁶⁵ Even so, the end result was precisely what the rebel Serbs wanted: the expulsion

¹⁵⁶ T. G., "Ni Bog vas ne može potpuno zaštititi", *Vjesnik*, 22 January 1994.

¹⁵⁷ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, UNPROFOR/HQZG/CA, Letter from Cedric Thornberry to Vladimir Šeks dated 22 September 1993.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, UNPROFOR/HQZG/CA, Letter from Cedric Thornberry to Đorđe Bjegović dated 22 September 1993.

¹⁶⁰ *Republika Hrvatska i Domovinski rat*, Document no. 320, Notice from SVK 18th Corps Command to subordinates dated 14 December 1993, IX: p. 465.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Document no. 192, Report of 15th Corps Command to SVK Main Staff dated 20 September 1995, p. 268.

¹⁶² T. G., "Podlapačani zaustavljeni na pola puta", *Vjesnik*, 19 January 1994.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ J. Karakaš, *Podlapac*, p. 181.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

of the Croatian population from Podlapača during the observed period was constant. Similarly, the safety of those who had remained was very precarious. In this sense, despite the efforts of the Czechs, over the long term the activities of the UN peacekeepers may be assessed as unsuccessful. There are some indications that the UNPROFOR troops themselves attempted to convince these residents to leave, and it is entirely certain that the fatalism expressed in Thornberry's statements to them as early as September 1993 did not help: "No one can guarantee complete safety, even if you had one UN soldier and one police officer for each individual. Not even God himself could keep you completely safe if he were standing next to each one of you".¹⁶⁶

The expulsion of the Croatian population from Podlapača serves as a lucid illustration of one of the most important features of the humanitarian situation in the areas under the protection of UN peacekeepers during the 1992-1995 period, and that was the continuation of ethnic cleansing in the territory under the control of the rebel Serbs. Instead of facilitating the return of the population, the UNPROFOR's functioning in the protected areas actually contributed to the overall atmosphere in which the expulsion of the non-Serb population became constant. But the creation of conditions for the return of displaced persons was one of the fundamental tasks which the UN peacekeeping force assumed under the Vance Plan. In this, they had to cooperate with numerous other humanitarian organizations, while implementation of displaced person returns was entrusted to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).¹⁶⁷ However, it was apparent that nothing would come of returning displaced persons to their homes inasmuch as the UNPROFOR did not manage to stabilize the situation in the protected areas. A condition for stabilization was certainly the consent of the rebel Serbs to the return of the displaced populations. This consent was entirely lacking, and the Krajina authorities had already begun implementing various measures in early 1992 aimed at preventing such returns.¹⁶⁸ The rebel Serbs made sure their stance was conveyed to the Croatian authorities. For example, via UNPROFOR, Croatian liaison officers in the Zadar area were told in no uncertain terms that any possibility of "the return of the Croatian populace to the area ever" was rejected.¹⁶⁹ A certain diffidence within the ranks of the UN peace mission with reference to the return of displaced persons could be felt immediately. First, at the very beginning it was apparent that the assumption of any firm commitments was avoided. Thornberry said in late March 1992 that "numerous members of UNPROFOR, among them approximately 500 police officers, will do their best to make sure

¹⁶⁶ T. G., "Ni Bog vas ne može potpuno zaštititi", *Vjesnik*, 22 January 1994.

¹⁶⁷ *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, Document no. 530, Report of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali on the deployment of "blue helmets" to Yugoslavia, dated 20 February 1992, III: p. 559.

¹⁶⁸ N. Barić, *Srpska pobuna*, pp. 391-393.

¹⁶⁹ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPPFMEZ/OSJ/Starigrad-Paklenica, Status report on the area of Jasenica, Maslenica and Rovanjaska dated 9 December 1992.

that displaced persons return to their homes and live there in peace".¹⁷⁰ The failure to demilitarize the protected areas, which was evident by the latter half of 1992, practically predetermined further developments. From that point forward, the accepted stance in statements made by all UN peace mission officials in Croatia was that the return of displaced persons could not be implemented because the security conditions for this had not been created. Nothing significant would change up to the very end of the UNPROFOR mandate in Croatia.

Certain activities aimed at creating conditions in the protected areas that could be conducive to the return of displaced persons were nonetheless undertaken. The UN peace mission's civilian affairs department organized an entire series of projects, such as one-day visits by displaced persons to their places of original residence and meetings of separated families at UNPROFOR checkpoints. All of these proved rather successful, but exclusively in UNPA West during the latter half of 1992. This success had to do with the somewhat more accommodating stance of the local Serbian civilian and military authorities, the exceptional persistence and dexterity of that sector's civilian affairs chief and the specific geographic aspects of UNPA West.¹⁷¹ Elsewhere such attempts failed already by mid-1992. In November 1992, the Croatian and Serbian sides in the Unešić areas managed to arrange the reciprocal visit by the local displaced Croatian population to local cemeteries. The visit proceeded without incident. Pointedly, this arrangement was made without notification being sent to the local UNPROFOR detachment.¹⁷² But these were exceptional cases which, despite the efforts of the Croatian authorities, did not become ongoing. The failure to create the conditions for the return of displaced persons obviously constituted a great burden for the UNPROFOR troops. There were indications that the military component of the UN peace mission felt that it should have been more actively involved. The commander of the French battalion, Colonel Robert Mille, was embittered by the actions of the civilian affairs chief in Sector South, Russian Viktor Andreev, who continually stressed "that it's still not time [for the return of displaced persons]"; he therefore decided on his own to create the conditions "for the return of displaced persons to Sveti Rok, Ričice and Novigrad".¹⁷³ Mille's assertions were nevertheless simply good intentions; the decision to use armed force was beyond the scope of his decision-making authority.

Instead of this, there were recorded cases in which the UNPROFOR obviously did not conduct itself with the greatest tact, or, at the very least, not

¹⁷⁰ "Pravni sistem po mjeri UNPROFOR-a", *Večernji list*, 29 March 1992.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Gerard Fischer, *Iskustva u provedbi mandata povjerenog Zaštitnim snagama UNPROFORA (UNPROFOR) u područjima pod zaštitom Ujedinjenih naroda (UNPA) Sektor Zapad* (Geneva: no publisher indicated, 1993).

¹⁷² MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Zadar, Extraordinary report of 1 November 1992.

¹⁷³ MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, MORH/GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ, Report on negotiations conducted with the UNPROFOR dated 17 September 1992.

quite in compliance with the mission's mandate. During the spring of 1992, according to Croatian sources, over 20,000 thousand Serbs were resettled in Sector East, mainly from western Slavonia. However, this figure continually increased, while at the same time the non-Serbian population from this area was expelled.¹⁷⁴ The UNPROFOR did not undertake any significant effort to oppose the obvious tendency of the local rebel Serbs to create an ethnically homogenous territory. Even worse, in response to the justified protests of the Croatian authorities, which threatened specific actions to prevent such tendencies, the UNPROFOR stated that only it had the authority over movements of civilian populations, which was obviously a euphemism used to conceal the tacit consent to the settlement of Serbs.¹⁷⁵ The loss of the UNPROFOR's neutrality is illustrated by the following example. Thanks to the improved security situation and the undoubtedly improved economic status, by the end of June 1993 almost 2,000 Serbian displaced persons and refugees returned to Sector West.¹⁷⁶ At the same time, not a single Croatian displaced person returned to the area of that same sector under Serbian control. Warned of this situation in September 1992, Sector Commander Zabala from Argentina passed the blame to the UNHCR, stating that his basic task was only to "create the security conditions for the return of displaced persons".¹⁷⁷ It is clear that such actions only increased the already present, and justified, Croatian dissatisfaction. Zagreb attempted to turn this to its advantage, which came to the fore in the summer of 1994 when displaced persons blockaded the UNPROFOR.¹⁷⁸

From the very beginning, the return of displaced persons in the territory of the UN protected areas was actually an attempt to square a circle. The obstruction of the rebel Serbs and the ambiguity of the UN peacekeeping mandate were only one side of the coin. The other consisted of the fact that these returns could not be carried forward without a change in the political context, i.e., without a political solution to the overall conflict in Croatia, and that was not the UNPROFOR's assignment. In other words, without the establishment of Croatian authority over the UN protected areas, returns were essentially a case of "mission impossible". The essence of the entire problem in Croatia was largely summed up in a statement by the Croatian defence minister at the time, Gojko Šušak. Speaking on this matter at a session of the Croatian Government in the summer of 1994, he pointed out "the enormous discrepancies between the desires of displaced persons, the UNPROFOR's

¹⁷⁴ HDA, UPRH/P/F 463, VRH/DKUNPF, Demand of the Republic of Croatia concerning control of its borders, dated 28 July 1992.

¹⁷⁵ HDA, UPRH/Military cabinet (VK), RH/Osijek Municipal Assembly, Letter from Zlatko Kramarić to Satish Nambiar dated 17 April 1992.

¹⁷⁶ MUPRH, PUBB/OAP, No. 511-02-01-4269/93, Data of 16 June 1993.

¹⁷⁷ MUPRH, PUBB/OAP, No. 511-06-01-3560/92, Report on the meeting held in Daruvar, dated 24 September 1992.

¹⁷⁸ M. Nobile, *Hrvatski feniks*, pp. 438-439.

capability and the aspirations of the international community to fulfil its assumed commitments".¹⁷⁹ It was obvious that the conditions for the return of displaced persons could only be created at higher decision-making levels. In this context, the already demonstrated fact that the UNPROFOR was "too slow and insufficiently effective" only additionally complicated matters.¹⁸⁰

The UNCRO in Croatia

In the first half of January 1995, Croatia's state leadership sent a letter to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in which it informed him that the Republic of Croatia intended to terminate the peacekeeping force's mandate. The decision was supposed to become effective on 30 March 1995, when yet another of the UNPROFOR's mandates was set to expire. The Croatian decision was rooted in the many years of dissatisfaction with the functioning of the UN peacekeeping force, which was incapable of making any notable progress in implementing the most important provisions of the peacekeeping operation. Moreover, Boutros-Ghali was told that the Croatian leadership considered "the continuation of the UNPROFOR's presence in the occupied territories counterproductive to the peace process".¹⁸¹ The international community's response to what was at that point the most vocal expression of Croatian dissatisfaction was to establish a new peacekeeping operation, under the designation UNCRO. The change in the official designation of the UN's peacekeeping operation in Croatia was actually the full extent of the change in comparison to the period when the peacekeepers bore the designation UNPROFOR. The rebel Serbs expressed aversion and dissatisfaction over the new UN peacekeeping operation, and particularly its official designation. For example, UNCRO troops were clearly told that their deployment on the borders between Croatia and Serbia was entirely unacceptable.¹⁸² There was no longer a chance of any attempts at demilitarization of the of the areas under the protection of the UN peacekeeping forces. After the Croatian operation which liberated western Slavonia, the situation in Sector South clearly demonstrated the failure of the peacekeeping forces: the rebel Serbs carried out a full military draft, activated their heavy artillery, deployed their forces to take up positions in the buffer zone, and military assistance was sent in from Serbia. The local UNCRO commander confirmed all of this information was confirmed for the Croatian authorities.¹⁸³ The situation was no better in Sector East: Serbian forces

¹⁷⁹ Branko Pek, *Na kraju puta* (Osijek: IBL Osijek, 2003), p. 120.

¹⁸⁰ "Prognanici još moraju čekati", *Večernji list*, 13 August 1992.

¹⁸¹ M. Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks*, p. 451.

¹⁸² MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO, Class.: 81/95-02/01, Ref. no.: 1076-15-95-111, Daily report of 18 April 1995.

¹⁸³ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Zadar, Extraordinary report of 19 July 1995.

openly assumed combat positions.¹⁸⁴ On the day on which Croatian military operations were launched in Sectors North and South, 5 August 1995, Serb forces carried out artillery and infantry attacks on Croatian positions in the village of Cerić. The Russian UNCRO battalion observed the entire campaign, and did not respond even when Serbian forces took over their checkpoint.¹⁸⁵ Clearly, the response of UNCRO forces during the Croatian military operation in May and August of 1995 may be interpreted in the same context; notified in due time on the commencement of these operations, UNCRO forces left their checkpoints and withdrew to their bases. There are some indicators which point to the conclusion that the UNCRO troops themselves did not consider the UN peacekeeping operation in Croatia a serious attempt at peacekeeping. At a meeting with the Croatian military authorities in Sector South in late April 1995, a Canadian officer, Desmond Morton, proposed that they hold a joint meeting which he believed “would yield results in the stabilization of the situation”.¹⁸⁶ How much he believed in the success of his own attempt was reflected in his statement that “it is not entirely certain that we will manage to get the Serbs to the table, but they did very patiently listen”; his statement that he was not at all “an optimist in the new UN mission/mandate” certainly could not have had a positive impact.¹⁸⁷ The conduct of the Czech battalion may also serve as an example which revealed the actual nature of the new UN peacekeeping operation. Their vehicles had registration plates which had written on them both UNCRO and UNPROFOR; the first were used in free Croatian territory, while the second were used in territory controlled by the Serbs. This was motivated by fear. According to the Czechs themselves, the rebel Serbs scrawled graffiti on their buildings, “messages such as, e.g., ‘TRAITORS’; and when they attempted to use the designation UNCRO, the Serbian response was “akin to lunacy”.¹⁸⁸ Upon the establishment of UNCRO, one Croatian diplomat claimed that with this Croatia had closed the file on UNPROFOR.¹⁸⁹ The establishment of a new UN peacekeeping operation in Croatia did not in fact bring anything new.

In Lieu of a Conclusion – An Attempt at an Assessment

Despite all of the arguments made above, assessing the peacekeeping operation in Croatia from 1992 to 1995 is no simple task. This is largely because

¹⁸⁴ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO, Class.: 81/95-02/01, Ref. no.: 1076-15-95-129, Report of 5 May 1995.

¹⁸⁵ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OUO/Vinkovci, Report of 5 August 1995.

¹⁸⁶ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Zadar, Extraordinary report of 19 April 1995.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/Lika-Otočac, Report dated 27 April 1995.

¹⁸⁹ M. Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks*, p. 459.

the concept of success in peacekeeping operations has still not been precisely defined.¹⁹⁰ A potentially simpler method is to assess the effectiveness of their mandates. In this sense, the mandates of UNPROFOR and UNCRO in Croatia may be deemed failures. The peacekeeping forces did little with reference to the two most vital aspects of the Vance Plan: demilitarization and establishment of sound security situations in the areas under UN protection. In the entire period under observation, the rebel Serbs obviously had at their disposal a high quantity of diverse arms, which they did not even bother to conceal. By the same token, this entire period was characterized by the persistence of repressive procedures aimed at the non-Serbian population in those territories. Certain positive results which the peacekeeping force managed to secure with regard to the two aforementioned aspects of the Vance Plan were usually rendered superfluous rather quickly, with the situation becoming even more grave. In this sense, the peacekeeping forces could be blamed for excessively rigid functioning within the framework of their mandate and failure to take advantage of the options available to them, particularly with reference to the use of force. Exceeding the necessary framework of neutrality, the obvious appearance of pro-Serbian clientelism and other numerous foibles also contributed to the ineffective implementation of their mandated tasks. Croatian dissatisfaction with their impact grew constantly, and came to a head in 1995. Paradoxically, the obvious failure during the course of the UN peacekeeping mandate in Croatia ended in the desired fashion at the expiry of the mandate, i.e., without a violent rupture. Reduced to only one of the protected areas established in 1992, in eastern Slavonia, the peacekeeping operation under the designation UNCRO folded peacefully in November 1995. This was not the only obvious paradox. It is easy to agree with the conclusion that – given the humanitarian aspect of the crisis – the situation would have been even worse without the peacekeepers. For there can be no doubt that the presence of UN peacekeepers nonetheless limited the violence of the conflict, and prevented its spread throughout Croatia, reduced human suffering and, despite obvious obstacles, managed to promote some ideas that were supposed to help regulate and resolve the conflict. There is no need to place special emphasis on the fact that these are all features of successful peacekeeping.

Assessing the performance of the UNPROFOR in Croatia in March 1995, US diplomat Herbert Okun said that the fundamental tasks of the Vance Plan were to insure the status quo, place the rebel Serbs' heavy weapons under effective control, demilitarize the protected areas, monitor the local police (primarily where this pertained to human rights) and help displaced persons return to their homes. Okun concluded that the UN peacekeeping forces succeeded in the first aim, but only initially in the second, while they failed to carry out the remaining three tasks. Additionally, he noted that the Vance Plan originally

¹⁹⁰ Darya Pushkina, "A Recipe for Success? Ingredients of a Successful Peacekeeping Mission", *International Peacekeeping* (London), 13 (2006), no. 2: 133.

foresaw the deployment of peacekeeping troops uniformly throughout the protected areas, and that this was altered by a UN Security Council decision, so that the majority of the forces were posted at the former battle lines.¹⁹¹ Quite predictably, the rebel Serbs saw this as the reinforcement of their borders, and they decided to fully obstruct the Vance Plan; equally predictably, understandable Croatian dissatisfaction ensued. Okun's arguments therefore point to the UN Security Council's policies as the factor which had a crucial impact on the course of peacekeeping operations in Croatia. Available information leads to the conclusion that the members of the UN peacekeeping forces themselves were aware of the difficulties of their position, which the chief of the Civilian Affairs Department in Sector North, Kenyan Charles Kirudja, described as "sit and watch".¹⁹² The complete rigidity of mandated authority was more than apparent. The members of the Czech battalion thus told the Croats that their "hands were tied and they are not able to perform their tasks".¹⁹³ The only body which had the authority to alter the UN peacekeeping mandate was the UN Security Council – the body which also set down the original mandate. There is nothing to indicate that this body would have even seriously considered changing the nature of the peacekeeping operation in Croatia (from peacekeeping to peace enforcement), even though, for example, Serbian obstruction of the Vance Plan was obvious already in 1992. The list of obvious miscarriages by the Security Council does not end here. Namely, it was precisely this body which should bear most of the blame for the complete loss of legitimacy of the peacekeeping forces, which was apparent already at the beginning of mid-1992. It was the Security Council which allowed the deployment of peacekeepers at the former battle lines, rather than in the entire protected areas. Ultimately, the Security Council's policies may also be deemed the primary motive behind the Croatian decision to initiate its military operations in 1995. The reasons for the Security Council's conduct in this regard should be sought in the features of the political and diplomatic actions of the international community vis-à-vis the Yugoslav crisis and the wars in the states which emerged after its collapse that had already been observed long before: the conflicting interests of the most important states, the lack of a unified policy, the assumption of pro-clientelist positions and a failure to keep pace with events. In this sense, the UN Security Council's operational mechanism – the UN peacekeeping troops – could not generate any other kind of result. Just as the body which formed them was characterized by numerous failings, so too did they necessarily reflect these failings. So far greater responsibility for the failure of the peacekeeping operation in Croatia is borne by the UN structures in New York than by the peacekeeping force command in Zagreb.

¹⁹¹ Herbert Okun, "What Vance Accomplished in Croatia", *New York Times*, 25 March 1995.

¹⁹² MVPEIRH, VRH/UUNPFPMEZ, MORH/GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSS, Notes from the meeting held on 30 July 1993.

¹⁹³ MORH, SVA, GSHV/UUNPFPMEZ/OSJ/ČZV Lika, Regular report dated 3 March 1993.

Vermeidbare Misserfolge: Friedenssicherungsmissionen in Kroatien 1991-1995

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel analysiert der Autor die Ursachen der Einrichtung von zwei Friedenssicherungsoperationen in Kroatien am Anfang und zu Mitte der 1990-er Jahre sowie das Implementieren von zwei ihren wichtigsten Komponenten und ihre Folgen. Der Autor stellte fest, dass es klassische Friedenssicherungsoperationen waren, basiert auf den von Diplomaten Cyrus Vance und Marrack Goulding im Namen der Vereinten Nationen vorgeschlagenen Dokumenten. Beide Operationen wurden schließlich als unerfolgreich geschätzt, meistens weil sie die unwirksame und unkoordinierte Politik der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft gegenüber Jugoslawien und den nach seiner gewaltsamen Desintegration entstandenen Staaten reflektierten.

