
UNPROFOR in Croatia

ZVONIMIR BALETIĆ

Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

Summary

The article gives a detailed account of the decisions about and activities of the UN peace-keeping forces (UNPROFOR) in Croatia since the end of 1991. The author analyses the reasons for the failure to accomplish its tasks of UNPROFOR in Croatia and demonstrates that the main obstacle has been the refusal of the Serbian side to cooperate in the implementation of the original UNPROFOR mandate. He argues that the question of prolonging the UNPROFOR mandate offers a chance to re-examine and redefine it according to experience to date.

To understand military and political developments in the Republic of Croatia since the autumn of 1991, the role and activities of the United Nations must be considered in settling the conflict between the Republic of Croatia, on one hand, and the Yugoslav Army, Serbia and Montenegro, and local Serb rebels, on the other. United Nations activities are felt in various ways, directly and indirectly, but most of all in the deployment of UN protection forces (UNPROFOR) as a peace-keeping force on the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Although the UN military presence as peace-keepers was not in itself crucial for keeping the peace, nor did it lead to the results that had at first been expected, it nevertheless had a great influence, and still does, on the development of the military and political situation in Croatia and its surroundings.

When Croatia was brutally attacked by the militarily stronger forces of the Yugoslav Army, Serbia, Montenegro and Serbian rebels from Croatia itself, the Croatian authorities from the very beginning worked to internationalize the conflict and obtain the support and help of world democratic forces, in the first place of the democratic countries of the West. This help for the main part failed to materialize, and Croatia was especially harmed by the arms embargo for the whole of Yugoslavia. This gave the Yugoslav Army and the more numerous Serbian military forces, which disposed of immense amounts of weapons and ammunition, a frightening superiority. True, the European Community sent its Monitoring Missions (ECMM) to observe what was happening, report to their governments and mediate between the conflicting forces, but at the time of the Brijuni Declaration of 7 July 1991 it was already clear that the crisis could not be peaceably resolved through the efforts of that Mission only.

The fury of the war and Croatia's military success surprised the world. In spite of a military advantage, the aggressor did not manage to defeat Croatia. This opened up perspectives for a long-lasting war and made the disintegration of Yugoslavia inevitable. In October and November 1991, in spite of minor successes, the strong enemy offensive was crushed. Croatia's great military, political and moral victory made international recognition imminent, and the aggressor had to re-examine his military and political aims. He rejected the plan to conquer all of Croatia and limited himself instead to securing the borders of an imagined "Greater Serbia", all the time using diplomatic initiatives to gain time for a respite and the consolidation of his own ranks.

UN Security Council Resolution 713 of 25 September 1991 expressed full support for efforts of the international community to bring peace and dialogue to Yugoslavia. It especially supported the monitors of the cessation of hostilities in Yugoslavia and the smooth development of the political process at the Conference on Yugoslavia. It called on all sides in the conflict to resolve their differences peaceably, and on the UN Secretary General to offer his services in agreement with the Yugoslav government. Although Croatia had proclaimed independence on 7 October 1991 and broken off all state relations with Yugoslavia, the UN continued to consider Yugoslavia the only legal entity with which to maintain official relations. After the Geneva Agreement to suspend hostilities, deblock Yugoslav Army barracks in Croatia and withdraw YA troops, weapons and military equipment from those barracks, which was signed on 23 November; the letter of the UN Secretary General to the Chairman of the Security Council in connection with the mission in Yugoslavia of his official envoy Cyrus Vance; and the initiative of the Yugoslav government in connection with keeping peace in Yugoslavia from 26 November; on 27 November the Security Council brought Resolution 721 demanding that the Secretary General urgently propose that the United Nations take over responsibility for keeping peace in Yugoslavia. The Security Council undertook to immediately examine the Secretary General's recommendations and reach an appropriate decision. It explicitly demanded the parties in the conflict in Yugoslavia to completely honour the Geneva Agreement of 23 November. Thus the UN peace-keeping operation began, under condition of a holding cease-fire. After consultations, the Croatian side agreed to the peace operations planned seeing in them a chance to gain peace and ensure independence in a peaceable manner, without more substantial loss of life, sacrifice and destruction.

On 11 December 1991 the Proposal for the United Nations Peace Keeping Operation in Yugoslavia was made public, as Supplement III to the UN Secretary General's Report. The proposal, publicly known as the Vance Plan, was developed by Cyrus Vance, personal envoy of the UN Secretary General, and Murrack Goulding, assistant to the Secretary General for special political issues. All the parties in the conflict accepted the proposed peace plan.

The UN peace operation on the territory of Yugoslavia was conceived as a temporary arrangement, with the goal of creating conditions for peaceful negotiations about the overall solution of the crisis. Special emphasis was laid on the fact that it did not prejudice the outcome of those negotiations. A condition for implementing the operation was that all the parties in the conflict must seriously and consistently adhere to the agreement, especially to the unconditional cease-fire that had been reached in Geneva on 23 November. The military forces that UN member states were to supply to the Secretary General were to be completely neutral and could use force only in self-defence.

The basic concept of the plan called for United Nations forces and police monitors (UNPROFOR) to be deployed on the territory of Croatia in areas named United Nations Protected Areas (UNPA). These areas were to be demilitarized, all armed forces were to withdraw from them or be disbanded, and UN protection forces were to guarantee the implementation and maintenance of demilitarization. Police monitors were to supervise the work of the local police, prevent discrimination against persons of any nationality and ensure the protection of human rights. The Yugoslav Army was to withdraw from all of Croatia. UNPROFOR, in cooperation with UN humanitarian agencies, was to ensure the peaceful and safe return of displaced persons to the "protected areas".

The protected areas were areas in which, in the opinion of UN Secretary General, special measures were needed in the transitory period, until an overall political solution was reached, to ensure the cease-fire. It was explicitly stated that these were areas in which the Serbs are a majority population or a significant minority population and where "tension among communities has resulted in conflict". After that specific areas in eastern and western Slavonia were named, in Banija, Kordun, Lika and northern Dalmatia. Those areas were exactly defined in the field by UN advance parties in consultation with local authorities. The plan was made with the best intentions, but the approach was wrong. Of course peace and security must be achieved, human rights protected, the displaced must return to their homes, but it was wrong to assume that tension and conflict in the areas with ethnically mixed populations resulted from a threat to the safety and human rights of the Serbian population. This was the Serbian interpretation of the events, but the Croatian side clearly showed that the local revolts of the Serbian population in Croatia were part of a wider strategy of the Yugoslav Army and Serbia to impose their political solutions on Croatia within the framework of Yugoslavia, using armed aggression. Thus the basic problem is how to protect Croatia from aggression, not how to protect the local Serbian population from possible excesses of the Croatian authorities or irresponsible individuals on the Croatian side. This second problem can successfully be solved only after the basic problem of aggression against Croatia is solved, in which a large number of local Serbs participated. That is why the Croatian side was not completely satisfied with the concept of the Vance Plan, but it nevertheless saw in it the possibility of ensuring the integrity and independence of Croatia in a peaceful way, without further destruction and loss of life, and by using extensive political and diplomatic initiative. When Croatia agreed to the Vance Plan, its great battle for international recognition began.

The Serbian side, on the other hand, continued military operations, wanting to gain control over as great as possible a territory by force before the final agreement on the implementation of the Vance Plan. However, after military setbacks in some areas, conscious of the great probability that Croatia would soon be internationally recognized, on 2 January 1992 in Sarajevo the Serbian side agreed to the complete suspension of hostilities. Wanting to sign a peace plan before Croatia's international recognition, the Serbian side confirmed that it completely accepted the plan and would fully cooperate in its implementation, but at the same time demanded additional guarantees for local Serbian communities in Croatia.

It was at this moment that the UN made a fatal mistake, which later backfired and caused the greatest difficulty in the implementation of the Vance Plan. Because

of the alleged concern for Serbian communities that were to come under UN protection, instead of demanding guarantees from the Croatian side, in whose territory and among whose population they are. Mr Goulding, in the name of the UN, gave his own interpretation of the status of the "protected areas". According to him, the UN peace mission would not end until an "overall political solution of the Yugoslav crisis" had been achieved, the deployment of UN forces would not change the *status quo*, and for the present the laws and institutions of the Republic of Croatia would not be valid in areas under UN protection. This interpretation is contrary to the spirit and meaning of the Vance Plan and to the opinion of the international Arbitration Commission chaired by R. Badinter, according to which the existing borders of the Republic of Croatia are considered frontiers in the sense of international law and according to which local Serb communities have no right to self-determination. Goulding's interpretation placed the territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia in doubt, encouraging Serbian separatist aspirations, and restricted UN peace force activities by approving local Serb authorities, which had been created through armed aggression against Croatia. The Croatian side protested, and embodied in its new Constitution the required additions concerning the protection of human rights and the rights of ethnic communities, and international control of that protection. But this had no basic influence on the status of the "protected areas", Goulding's guarantees only encouraged the local rebel forces to ignore the Croatian guarantees.

The process of international recognition of the Republic of Croatia ran collaterally. Croatia's high level of cooperativity, the guarantees given in the Constitution for the protection of human and ethnic rights, with special guarantees for the autonomy of the Serbian ethnic community in Croatia, speeded up recognition of the Republic of Croatia as a sovereign and independent state within its existing borders, and its acceptance in the UN and other international organizations. The Vance Peace Plan, which explicitly states that it does not prejudice political solutions, should have been adapted to the new internationally verified political situation, but UN representatives rigidly adhered to the initial framework that had in the meantime disappeared. Thus their attitude towards new political realities was negatively prejudiced. To wait for an "overall political solution of the Yugoslav crisis" in a situation when the common state had disappeared and when individual states on its territory had become internationally recognized is a dangerous illusion, which implicitly supports Serbian expansionist pretensions.

Long and difficult talks were held on this subject with UN representatives, and the Croatian authorities several times cautioned about the danger that the peace process might be blocked and compromised. The UN was brought into a state of confusion and inertia by its lack of clear insight into the political processes that had led to the armed conflict and the way in which it could be resolved, and this was an advantage for the side in the conflict that disposed of greater might. The Croatian side saw this danger clearly, but did not have much choice because it could not allow itself to discard the Vance Plan and be charged with refusing a peaceful solution. It counted on the logic of the peace plan itself and on the consistency of the people who were to implement it. Thus Croatia agreed to the Vance Plan and the coming and deployment of the UN forces that were to implement it.

In pursuance of Security Council Resolution 740 of 7 February and 743 of 21 February 1992, the UNPROFOR operation in Croatia began with the arrival of 50 liaison officers commanded by Colonel Wilson. That group was joined by 25 more officers, and on 10 March 1992 the UNPROFOR advance party arrived in Zagreb with its Commander-in-Chief General Satish Nambiar and his staff. Separate agreements were made with the Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of the Republic of Croatia about UNPROFOR deployment, and Sarajevo was chosen as headquarters. Since this was to be a peace mission in Croatia, this arrangement shows the UN's insufficiently defined attitude towards relations in Yugoslavia and the status of Croatia. A lot was ceded to the Serbian side by not mentioning the status of Croatia as a state and by not defining its complete territory as an UNPA zone. Concessions to the Serbian side were motivated by the need for cooperation with the Yugoslav authorities and local Serbian authorities, but they encroached on some questions of principle and were not acceptable to the Croatian side. The Croats made several objections of principle when the agreement on the status of UNPROFOR in Croatia was being defined, especially in connection with the names of acts and the definition of some concepts. Thus the agreement was never signed. In its declarations of 10 and 21 February the Government of the Republic of Croatia made it clear that by accepting the peace plan as a whole, it was not undertaking any obligations outside the framework established by the plan nor for its arbitrary interpretation, and that it considered that only the laws and institutions, i.e. the legal order, of the Republic of Croatia could be valid in "protected areas".

Security Council Resolution 743 of 21 February 1992 charged UN Secretary General with instituting UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) and deploying them as soon as possible in the crisis areas, as demanded by the peace plan. The operation was to last for 12 months, unless the Security Council decided otherwise in the meantime. The resolution again emphasized that the UN peace plan and its implementation did not prejudice the political solution in any way, and the Yugoslav parties were called on to cooperate with the Conference on Yugoslavia to achieve a political solution in accord with the principles of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Resort to the principles of the CSCE as a framework for the political solution was a new and very important element, because it determined the framework for the work of the Conference on Yugoslavia, and indirectly also the framework for the work of UNPROFOR. Since it was the UN that had prescribed that framework for the Conference on Yugoslavia, it was also required for the activities of UN bodies and UNPROFOR. The principles of the CSCE are more than relevant for honouring borders, the position of minorities, protecting human rights and the like, and provide important guidelines for possible unclear points and different interpretations of the peace plan.

Unfortunately, this was not sufficiently taken into consideration when the peace plan was being developed. The operative plan kept strictly to the Vance Plan from December 1991, when SFR Yugoslavia had been the only subject of international law. Thus the operative plan was developed as a plan for Yugoslavia, not for Croatia, which had in the meantime become a subject of international law with completely determined state frontiers. The UNPROFOR headquarters were placed in Sarajevo, with logistic bases in Banja Luka, Belgrade and Zagreb, and an engineer battalion in Banja Luka for support to the forces in Croatia. Croatian objections that the operation had been determined only for Croatia and that Croatia was

now an internationally recognized state with its own frontiers were always countered by saying that the UNPROFOR operation does not prejudice political solutions, although such behaviour clearly did prejudice it. The deployment of forces was always considered a professional and military matter completely at the discretion of the UNPROFOR commander-in-chief. In fact it, too, was to a great degree political. The fact that the headquarters were in Sarajevo made more frequent and fruitful cooperation for Croatia impossible. All the later difficulties in communication showed that the choice of Sarajevo and Banja Luka had been completely wrong, especially after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina broke out. The headquarters first moved to Belgrade, then to Zagreb, and the logistics base moved from Banja Luka to Zagreb. This led to great delay in the deployment of forces and taking over responsibility in the "protected areas", and to additional expense. These mistakes resulted from the rigid application of the initial conception although the international legal conditions had later changed, also of a mistaken appraisal of military and political conditions.

The "protected areas" in Croatia are not one geographical whole and are divided into four operative sectors. UNPROFOR has the task of covering the whole "protected" territory, not only the line of cease fire, and after the withdrawal of the YNA to disarm the remaining military units, ensure lasting demilitarization, help the establishment of civilian authorities and secure the return of displaced persons and refugees. Twelve infantry battalions were deployed for that purpose: two in the Eastern Sector (along the Danube), four in the Western Sector (in western Slavonia), three in the Northern Sector (in central Croatia) and three in the Southern Sector (in Lika and northern Dalmatia). To those forces were added a headquarters company, a traffic control unit, a battalion of engineers, logistics battalion, signal-corps battalion, construction battalion, medical unit and 100 military observers, whose task it was to monitor the implementation of demilitarization and then move into Bosnia-Herzegovina to control the borderline with Croatia.

As for the UNPROFOR police force, it had originally been decided to deploy 530 police, but later that number was reduced somewhat. A small number of civilians were recruited from among the local population.

The total number of persons engaged in the UNPROFOR operation in Croatia was 14,000. This is one of the most extensive UN peace-keeping operations, and was granted a budget of US \$608 million. The units are lightly armed and without the right to fire except in self-defence. UNPROFOR's military power is relatively modest in comparison with modern combat units of similar size, but its political, moral and psychological power is much greater. In evaluating UNPROFOR's role the discrepancy between its military power and its overall influence must always be born in mind. Another important factor of these forces is that they are multinational, made up of soldiers from countries with varied traditions. UNPROFOR operations in Croatia engage military and civilian personnel from 27 countries.

UNPROFOR should have taken over responsibility in the "protected areas" on 25 April, but the date was moved to the middle of May. The organization of the units' arrival and deployment showed itself to be more complex than had been expected, and the fighting in Sarajevo and the constant breaches of the cease-fire in Croatia made the implementation of its tasks much more difficult. The

fierce shelling of towns in Croatia continued (Osijek, Vinkovci, Dubrovnik). However, the situation in Croatia gradually quietened as war erupted in full violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which placed the peace operation in a completely new context.

YNA withdrawal from Croatia, called for by the Vance Plan, showed itself to be more in the function of Serbian aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina than the establishment of peace in Croatia. YNA military units retreated into Bosnia-Herzegovina to join war operations there, leaving UNPROFOR to guard the "protected areas" in Croatia from possible attack by the Croatian army. In addition, before it withdrew the YNA handed over a lot of weapons and ammunition to the local Serbian territorial defence, and transferred part of the weapons and personnel to the local police force. The peace plan called for all those forces to be disarmed and disbanded, but this was not done. A small amount of heavy weaponry was placed in warehouses under formal UNPROFOR custody, but always remained in reach of local military units. Demilitarization, which was a key element of the Vance Peace Plan, did not achieve its purpose in practice because weapons that were withdrawn from Croatia contributed to greater military activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and those that remained were at the disposal of military units in the "protected areas". What is worse, the Serbian authorities in "protected areas" felt safer in the presence of UNPROFOR and continued aggression using new methods. They began to banish the non-Serbian population from those areas, plundering and destroying their property and creating ethnically clean areas with the obvious intention of preventing their return and creating conditions for those areas to break off from Croatia. The local Serbian authorities used UNPROFOR presence to make it impossible to implement the peace plan and to turn occupation into a permanent state. This placed the UN protection forces in the position of protecting aggression instead of implementing the peace plan and guarding the interests of the population and state to which those areas legally belong. UNPROFOR, of course, was conscious of this abuse, they often protested and tried to protect the threatened population, but these were only emergency measures. In most cases the members of UNPROFOR were the helpless witnesses of violence they were powerless to stop. The Serbian tactics were to provoke incidents on the line of cease-fire and engage UNPROFOR along this boundary line towards Croatian forces, thus making sure of not being attacked from that quarter and preventing the UN from controlling what was going on in the whole protected area.

UNPROFOR made another great mistake in its interpretation of the Vance Peace Plan by giving the status of "local civilian authorities" called for in that plan to the illegal authorities that had been installed by aggression. The peace plan calls for the establishment of local authorities on the principle of proportional ethnic representation, which is yet to be established. UNPROFOR did not even try to do anything in this field, instead they recognized existing structures as local representatives. Besides, when the Vance Plan mentions "protected areas" in the plural form, it means occupied areas of Croatia that never had any common authorities except the authorities of the Croatian state, whereas UNPROFOR recognized the self-named government in Knin as the representative of "local authorities" in all the protected areas. UNPROFOR did not, of course, recognize the so-called Serbian Republic of Krajina as a state, but through its contacts with the "government" in Knin it encouraged the occupying authorities to feel that they

were at least tolerated. Instead of that, UNPROFOR should have established contacts with local authorities in each of the areas separately, which would have been a more adequate interpretation of the concept of "local authorities".

When the deployment of UNPROFOR forces in the "protected areas" was being discussed a question arose that surpasses the framework of the UN peace plan. The peace plan did not include among the "protected areas" in Croatia some areas that were under YNA control. The Serbian side demanded that those areas, too, should be included among the "protected areas". The Croatian side did not agree to this, but requested UNPROFOR help because of the presence of Serbian paramilitary units in those areas and their links with similar units in the "protected areas", and the threats that the Serbian side would reject the Vance Plan. This is how the problem of the so-called "pink zones" arose.

Long talks were held on this issue during Goulding's visit at the beginning of May. The Vance Plan called for immediate and unconditional Croatian control over those areas after the withdrawal of the YNA, but because of the danger of new hostilities, on the insistence of the UN, Croatia agreed for UNPROFOR and the EC Monitoring Mission to monitor and help the establishment of Croatian rule there to make sure the whole process evolved in peace and order. UN Secretary General said as much in his report to the Security Council on 26 June 1992, expressing his special thanks to the Government of Croatia.

UN insistence on the special status of the "pink zones" was explained by their ethnically mixed character, which was not acceptable to Croatia because the Croatian state guarantees the protection of human and ethnic rights to all citizens in its territory. Nevertheless, it agreed to the arrangement trusting in the UN and EC to use all the means at their disposal to reach the solution agreed on. For its mission in the "pink zones" UNPROFOR got 60 new military observers and 120 civilian policemen to direct and monitor the establishment of Croatian rule in agreement with the Croatian Government and all others concerned. The UN Security Council entrusted this task to a Joint Commission chaired by an UNPROFOR representative and including representatives of the EC Monitoring Mission, the Government of the Republic of Croatia and local authorities. This time, too, the UN Secretariat interpreted "local" authorities as authorities from the self-named "Republic of Serbian Krajina". Thus they placed the "pink zones", which should by decision of the Security Council unconditionally have been returned to Croatia, under the authority of the Knin "government".

Introducing the Knin "government" into the Joint Commission and into the decision-making process about the "pink zones" blocked the Commission's work right from the start. Instead of cooperating in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 762, the Serbian side proclaimed the "protected areas" and the "pink zones" a single "state" and the line of cease-fire the border of that "state" with Croatia. Thus it explicitly rejected the Vance Plan and that resolution. The Croatian side insisted on an immediate ultimatum to the Serbian side: either they cooperate on implementing the resolution, or work on the establishment of Croatian rule will continue without them (in the worst case the Security Council will be informed of the failure). Instead, UNPROFOR representatives continued with useless attempts to persuade the Serbian side to cooperate. After several lost months, eight meetings of the Joint Commission and several meetings of subcommittees, on 9 November 1992 UNPROFOR established that not even the

first step had been taken in realizing the mandate and that the work of the Commission was to be terminated for the present.

Similar developments occurred in the "protected areas" where UNPROFOR responsibilities were greater and more direct. There UNPROFOR quietly watched the establishment of a Serbian "state" in Croatia and preparations for its "unification" with other Serbian states. Security Council Resolution 769 of 7 August 1992, which confirms the proposals of the Secretary General's report, gave UNPROFOR a new task: to establish control over Croatia's international borders with Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in places where they coincide with the borders of the "protected areas" and "pink zones", not only for the crossing of weapons, ammunition and other war material, but also the crossing of the population and customs control. This was of great importance because Serbian military units, which UNPROFOR was to have disarmed, crossed into Bosnia-Herzegovina with all their weapons, fought there and freely returned to Croatia. Various paramilitary units from Bosnia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia also came to Croatia and then returned. The Eastern Sector, which lies along the Danube, was used for infringing the economic sanctions the UN had introduced against FR Yugoslavia. Thus the control of Croatia's international borders might essentially contribute to ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and implementing the Vance Plan in Croatia.

UNPROFOR did no more than make some shy attempts to fulfill this task. Some UNPROFOR members in the Eastern Sector even took part in infringing the imports embargo into FR Yugoslavia. The local non-Serbian population in Croatian areas under UN protection is constantly exposed to expulsion and the plunder of their property, and people from other states are moving into their homes. Since the arrival of UNPROFOR, about 600 Croats were killed and several thousand expelled in the Eastern Sector only. All the Croatian population was "cleansed" from the other sectors. They were either killed or expelled, and UNPROFOR did not offer them any protection except help in transporting them to territory under Croatian control. The same is true of the "pink zones", from which the Croatian population was also expelled.

As a whole, UNPROFOR presence in Croatia has not even approximately achieved the results expected. Indeed, it has made it easier for the Serbian rebels to fortify their illegal rule, impose themselves as the only representatives of the Serbian population in the occupied areas, carry out ethnic cleansing and more or less join up Croatian regions under UN protection with Serbia and the so-called Serbian Republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina. UNPROFOR's indecision and disorientation encouraged the aggressive activities of the Serb rebel forces. The victims of aggression, who should have been protected, got no protection and the aggressors were protected to carry out their intentions. UNPROFOR has no excuse for this.

The fact that UNPROFOR presence decreased the intensity of hostilities in Croatia and spared it further destruction and loss of life is considered to be a positive result of its one-year mandate. This would have been true if Serbian aggression had not descended on Bosnia-Herzegovina in the same period, given greater chances for success by the relative peace in Croatia. It is an open question whether the Serbs would have been able to fight with equal intensity in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. An even more unfavourable circumstance for Croatia is that not a single problem resulting from Serbian aggression and occupation has yet been solved. To what degree can UN forces be relied on to bring peace, security and integrity to Croatia is a question of increasing concern

for the Croatian population as a whole, and especially for those who were ousted from their homes. The citizens of Croatia had expected the international community, especially the UN, to help the displaced return to their homes and the peaceful establishment of the legal order of Croatia on its whole territory, so that they could start economic and social renewal and look with confidence into the future. This had been promised to them by United Nations decisions. Today they realize that they had expected too much, and that they must in future place greater reliance on their own forces.

Bearing all this in mind, the decision made by the Croatian authorities at the end of January 1993 to undertake a limited military operation and retake the area around the bridge on the Novigrad Strait was logical. This was an effort to get things moving and take practical steps to hasten solutions that were by UN decisions long overdue. The area around the destroyed bridge was chosen because it has great communications and economic importance for the whole of Croatia, especially for its southern part, and for all UNPROFOR activities in southern Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The operation was limited to establishing control over the narrow belt flanking the road to Zadar, which ran partly through the "protected area" and partly through the "pink zone", but which was almost completely populated by Croats. The limited nature of the operation was motivated by the desire to avoid consequences for the civilian Serbian population, leave possibilities open for the continuation of the peace process with the help of UNPROFOR, but make it clear how deeply concerned Croatia is to solve questions imposed by the occupation of its territory. Also, that it will not indefinitely tolerate the stalemate on serious activities to implement Security Council decisions.

UN and UNPROFOR reactions in the field to this operation were sharp, but not deep seated. The Croatian side was accused of breaking the cease-fire, which would have been justified if the Serbian side had honoured the previously-accepted rulings of the peace plan and earlier Security Council resolutions, which include many obligations for the Serbian side. Not only did the Serbian side not fulfill its obligations, but it systematically refused even to talk about them. UNPROFOR behaved as if the cease-fire was the main substance of the peace process and as if all the other decisions were merely supplementary, their implementation neither obligatory nor limited in time. Thus the peace process was reduced to the cease-fire, allowing the Serbian side to block all activities that would take it further than a cease-fire and thus divesting it of any deeper and more lasting substance. This, however, is not a way to create a foundation for lasting peace and remove the causes that led to armed conflict. Instead it opens up a path to noncompliance with Security Council decisions and new conflict.

Security Council Resolution 802 of 25 January 1993 is no clearer from that aspect. The Croatian side is accused of armed attack on areas under UNPROFOR protection, thus leading to the rapid and intense deterioration of the situation in Croatia, although it recognizes that during recent months the Serbian side had refused to cooperate within the framework of the peace plan. However, if the Serbian side refuses to implement Security Council decisions and UNPROFOR has neither the mandate nor the power to make it, why should only Croatia be forced to indefinitely tolerate aggressive Serbian activities whose only purpose is to create a lasting foundation to obstruct the implementation of the Vance Plan. The demand that the Croatian side withdraw its armed forces from the area it liberated in combat in January encourages the Serbian side to reject cooperation, although

it is called on to completely and unconditionally cooperate on implementing the UN peace plan and disband its paramilitary units. If Croatia were to withdraw her armed forces, as demanded by the UN as a precondition for continuing the peace process, the opposite effect would ensue. Any real threat to the Serbian side for obstructing the peace process would be removed.

Security Council Resolution 807 of 19 February 1993 mitigates to a certain extent the one-sided condemnation of the Croatian side for breaking the cease-fire, although it calls on Resolution 802 and other earlier resolutions, and also on the priority of maintaining the cease-fire. The resolution explicitly calls on the "parties in the conflict and others who are involved to completely adhere to the UN plan for maintaining peace in Croatia and other obligations they have undertaken". It is normal to expect an extension of UNPROFOR's mandate to completely implement the peace plan, but this is not a formal question because it necessarily increases severity towards the Serbian side, which does not want to cooperate on implementing that plan. The time limit for UNPROFOR operations was prolonged only until 31 March 1993, which is a really short term, during which more essential progress in implementing the peace plan is to be achieved. Because of UNPROFOR's obvious failure during the last year to justify its mandate, which the Croatian military operation only revealed, the prolonged mandate is an opportunity for a new approach. It would be unrealistic to expect that the peace process can end in that time limit, but it must be used for some basic changes that will rekindle confidence in its efficiency and provide a basis for new extension. The excuse that the peace-keeping mechanism is not adequate for the real problems that demand solution can no longer be accepted, because extending the mandate is a chance to re-examine the mandate itself and redefine it according to experience to date. Now it is Croatia's turn to decide whether and under what conditions it will continue to cooperate through the UNPROFOR mechanism or whether it will seek alternative solutions. Possible pressure on Croatia to extend the UNPROFOR mandate under existing conditions, without new guarantees that the peace plan will be implemented completely, would serve neither Croatia nor the dignity of the United Nations. This guarantee must primarily be demanded in the form of additional international political decisions, but also in UNPROFOR's greater capacity and resolution to make decisions quickly and implement them effectively.