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**THE ROLE OF BRITAIN IN YUGOSLAVIA
AND ITS SUCCESSOR STATES: 1991-1995**

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**Dissertation submitted for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

There has been much criticism of international diplomacy in former Yugoslavia from 1991-95, with official investigations carried out into the role of key international players including France, the Netherlands and the United Nations. A number of states and institutions have been cited as responsible for aspects of the international failure, such as Germany for its 'premature' recognition of Croatia, the United States for failing to commit ground troops in the Bosnian war, the United Nations for failing to protect UN declared 'safe areas', and the European Community/Union for its lack of resolve. There has, on the other hand, been only limited scrutiny into the British role in the war, and none at institutional or governmental level. The only full-length study so far published is by Brendan Simms, entitled *Unfinest Hour. The Destruction of Bosnia* (2001).

This thesis comprises an empirical study of the British role in Yugoslavia and its successor states between 1991 and 1995, and demonstrates that the British government led the international 'consensus' during that time, through what may be considered a doctrine of assertive appeasement while, at the same time, misleading parliament on issues crucial to an understanding of the situation. It also demonstrates that British policy was consistent, unlike that of its western allies, in obstructing initiatives aimed at effective international military intervention, which resulted in a prolongation of the war, and advanced the agenda of the Belgrade regime.

The motives which may have guided British policy in this instance are discussed briefly in the introductory chapter which offers an outline of the global framework within which British policy was formulated in the wake of the Cold War, with particular reference to Britain's place in the new European order, following the downing of the Berlin Wall, and in the lead-up to the Maastricht Treaty. A chronological approach has been adopted as the most appropriate in demonstrating some of the intricate manoeuvres which characterised British diplomacy in the region at crucial junctures of the war.

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PREFACE/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although the turmoil in Yugoslavia and its successor states during the 1990s spawned a vast volume of literature, including three detailed reports into the Srebrenica crisis, there has been little analysis of the British role in the region during the war, and only one full-length study, *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*, by Brendan Simms. Other studies include *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, published in 1997 by James Gow with a section on British policy, *Honest Broker or Perfidious Albion? British Policy in Former Yugoslavia*, a short study by Jane Sharp, published in 1997, and *The Serb Lobby in the United Kingdom*, published in 1999 by this author who also co-authored a report for the European Commission, *A Test for Europe. Report: Confidence Building in Former Yugoslavia* (1996), with a brief review of the British role in the conflict.

This thesis reaches similar conclusions to Simms' study, namely that Britain assumed a leading role in the conflict and, in the process, alienated some of its closest allies. On the other hand, Simms confines his study to the Bosnian war, and attributes the failure of British policy to a form of 'negative Conservative pessimism' leading to a lack of political will, which is the main theme of James Gow's analysis. Gow, unlike Simms, is a regional specialist but was constricted by his official advisory capacity which, as Simms suggested, may have impelled him to 'calibrate his advice according to the circumstances and the prevailing policy'.¹ Gow contends that, while British policy in Bosnia failed, its failure was shared internationally, and resulted from a lack of sufficient will on the part of leading powers and institutions to take the action necessary to end the war sooner.

¹ SIMMS, Brendan. *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*. Penguin, 2001, p.251.

This study draws from material published in the languages of former Yugoslavia, and French and Italian, and benefits from recent publications, including memoirs by some of the leading players, the extensive French and Dutch reports, and evidence offered at the trial of Slobodan Milosevic and other indictees at the International Tribunal at the Hague. It also draws extensively on parliamentary proceedings and Select Committee evidence.

International policy on Yugoslavia and its successor states was partly shaped by a number of myths surrounding the war and its genesis, many of which emanated from Belgrade. These included the characterisation of the war as of a civil or religious nature, the belief that it was rooted in centuries of ethnic hatred, that the Serbs were militarily invincible, that Serbia was the best guarantor of the continuance of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and that the international recognition of Croatia was premature, and thereafter circumscribed international policy in the area, leading to full-scale war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In order to examine some of these myths and their interaction with international, and particularly British, policy, a chronological approach has been adopted. This has also facilitated analysis of the international debate in relation to developments on the ground, to demonstrate the way in which Britain endeavoured to maintain control of the political process throughout the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, foiling attempts by other international players to introduce measures which may have contributed to restoring the balance between the different communities to end the war, including, amongst other measures, the threat and use of military force, removal of the inequitable embargo on armaments, a more stringent implementation of UN sanctions and other Security Council resolutions, and early enforcement of an air exclusion zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Since international policy in former Yugoslavia was decided primarily within the UN Security Council, the positions of the other Permanent Members of the Council, in particular the United States and France, are

assessed in relation to developments on the ground. Chapter 1 (1991) focuses on the prelude to hostilities, and the six-month war in Croatia, during which time most of the main elements of international policy in the area were formulated, including the introduction of the UN arms embargo, the establishment of a peace conference, chaired by a former British foreign secretary, Peter Lord Carrington, and the eschewal of military intervention to stem the conflict. In Chapter 2 (1992), the build-up to war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is examined, as well as the role of UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, and of Lord Carrington in launching the Cutileiro Plan for the ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It also assesses the influence of Britain during its tenure of the EC Presidency, in particular through the London Conference and the despatch of 1,800 British UN troops to Bosnia with a mandate to escort humanitarian aid. 1993 was dominated by a series of international peace plans, most of them under the aegis of another former British foreign secretary, David Lord Owen, appointed European negotiator and co-chair of the steering committee of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia, working firstly with former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and with former 1st Secretary at the Norwegian embassy in Belgrade, Thorvald Stoltenberg. In Chapter 3, the influence of the Vance-Owen Plan in particular is analysed, both in relation to events on the ground in Bosnia and to the evolution of international policy and the establishment of UN 'safe areas'. While David Owen's influence on international policy continued till his retirement in 1995, much of the spotlight in 1994 transferred to the new British UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lt. General Sir Michael Rose, at a time when international policy was tested by the Bosnian Serb army in assaults on three UN 'safe areas'. Chapter 4 examines the role of General Rose who acted in a political, as well as military, capacity in the 'safe areas' crises, with consequences both for international policy and the situation on the ground. In 1995, the single greatest atrocity in Europe since World War II took place, as over 7,000 men and boys were massacred following the fall of the UN 'safe area' of Srebrenica to Serb forces, challenging the main

precepts on which the British-led policy had been based. In Chapter 5, the British government role in the prelude to, and aftermath of, the massacre is assessed and contrasted with that of the new British UN Commander, Lt. General Rupert Smith as he, in coordination with the Commander of NATO's Southern Command, finally acted to bring the war to an end.

The research for this thesis is also based on a study of the languages, literature and history of Yugoslavia over a period of more than thirty years, with extended stays in the country and region on a working, study and personal basis, including from July 1990 to April 1991, directly preceding the outbreak of war. Frequent visits were made to the area during the war and afterwards, in the course of implementing two European Commission projects, as well as on humanitarian grounds. Participation in academic conferences at the Universities of London, Keele, Bristol, Aberdeen and Wales, as well as Tuzla, Skopje and Montenegro, have provided an invaluable opportunity for an exchange of views and information.

Knowledge of the languages has often enabled the direct contact essential to an understanding of some of the subtler undercurrents affecting relations, both within and amongst the different communities, and towards outside protagonists. I am grateful to the Social Science Research Council for an initial grant towards this dissertation, allowing the time and opportunity to research more fully into the background of the region, which later proved invaluable to an understanding of the rapid developments of the early 1990s. I would like to acknowledge the support of my former supervisor, the late Professor Alec Nove, for encouragement and discussion on some of the wider aspects of the issue, and to Professor Hillel Ticktin, for his assistance in the final presentation.

Acknowledgement is also due to the University of Glasgow Library, the Mitchell Library, and the libraries of London University (SSEES) and the House of Commons. My thanks go to Professor Nenad Bicanic for the loan of his comprehensive tapes recording British television coverage of the war, to Marjan Koharic for taping Serbian and Croatian TV coverage, to Ilario Salucci for generously sharing his files of the Italian media coverage

of the war, and to the UNHCR for providing maps contemporaneous with the situation on the ground in Bosnia. Extended correspondence with over a hundred Members of Parliament on the Bosnian war, as well as with the East Adriatic Office and the Ministry of Defence, has also been helpful.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the benefit of frank and useful exchanges of information with numerous other people, including the late Sir Fitzroy Maclean, Vladimir Velebit, Henri Wynaendts, Sir Russell Johnstone, Professor Ervin Staub, Professor Thomas Cushman, Professor Wohlstetter, Sir Kenneth Scott, Sir Martin Garrod, officials from the Cabinet of former EC Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Hans Van den Broek, former ambassadors to the UK, Ante Cicin-Sain, Muhamed Filipovic and Osman Topcagic, former Bosnian government ministers Ejup Ganic and Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, the Croatian foreign minister Tonino Picula, founder member of the Belgrade Circle, Professor Obrad Savic, officers at the Hague Tribunal, including David Talbot, John James and Jonathan Cina, Peter Kessler at the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Pentagon officials at the office of the late Joe Kreuzel, staff at the International Crisis Group and, not least, the late US Senator Frank McCloskey.

INTRODUCTION

In the Cold War international order, Britain enjoyed a pivotal role amongst western powers, and was an essential partner to the United States in guaranteeing West European security. Its privileged status as a nuclear power, and as a leading European military power with a disproportionate share in NATO military commands, marked Britain out amongst other European states.¹ Britain also differed from its European partners in its trade and investment patterns, its continued military and political commitments in the dependent territories and Commonwealth, and its entrenched position in the Security Council and other global institutions. Yet the erosion of international arrangements and national institutions largely predicated on the Cold War, coupled with Britain's indigenous industrial decline and economic under-performance, suggested it was likely to have a diminished role in the post Cold War order. The City of London's world leadership in various markets had been assisted by deregulation and a 'light' administration of rules. The new global order confronted Britain with the choice between settling for the status of a middle-rating European power commensurate with its economic performance, and attempting to retain its long-enjoyed world power status.²

The end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany also led to a reassessment on the part of European leaders attempting to come to terms with the new order, and particularly Britain as it found itself on the periphery of a European order dominated by Germany and France which were locked into an interdependent relationship, substantially determined by the Cold War. German reunification, transforming it easily into the largest European power, threatened Britain's *primus inter*

¹ WALLACE, William. British Foreign Policy after the Cold War. *International Affairs* 68, 3,1992, p.427.

² See HUTTON, Will. Britain in a Cold Climate: the economic aims of foreign policy in the 1990s. *International Affairs* 68, 3,1992, p.619-632.

pari passu status in Europe. Yet Britain was not prepared for a diminished status, or a reduced scope for autonomous action which the terms of the Maastricht Treaty seemed to presage.

The Yugoslav crisis erupted in the interval between the Gulf War and the final disintegration of the Soviet Union, and in the midst of the Maastricht negotiations. The United States, emerging from a qualified victory in the Gulf, looked to the European Community to address what was generally viewed as a limited regional war. The (in)famous remark of the Luxemburg Foreign Minister and EC Troika member, Jacques Poos, as war broke out in Yugoslavia, that 'This is the hour of Europe', reflected at that time the overall sentiment of European leaders some of whom, France in particular, attempted to promote the role of European institutions such as the Western European Union in resolving the crisis, as part of a general attempt to establish a viable European Common Foreign and Security Policy, independent of the United States.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd's unqualified rejection of the use of military force in Croatia at the WEU and Council of Ministers' meetings in September 1991 was generally viewed at the time as British reluctance to become involved militarily in what might turn out to be a lengthy, open-ended battle in the Balkans. The imposition of a blanket arms embargo in the same month by the United Nations, on Britain's initiative, reinforced the impression that Britain had opted for a containment policy. Although the use of force remained the main issue of contention between Britain and many of its European partners, the UK position appeared plausible at the time, not least in light of Britain's experience in Northern Ireland where, despite the considerable military commitment, hostilities had continued for over two decades.³ The European Community's eschewal of military intervention prevailed, with a few exceptions, till 1995, earning it the reputation of a lack of political

³ This was the argument offered to the author by former Defence Secretary, John Nott, in October 1995.

will, a label which was subsequently extended to the United States which was disinclined to commit ground troops to Bosnia, and reluctant to intervene with air power, in the absence of the approval of its main European ally, Britain.

Britain was perhaps less pusillanimous on the Yugoslav issue than was generally supposed, however. As argued above, with the erosion of Soviet power, and the concomitant diminution in Britain's strategic value to the United States, the UK position within the European Community, as it moved towards closer political cooperation, assumed greater relevance in Britain's endeavours to sustain its world power status. This was reflected not least in lengthy debates in the House of Commons during 1991 and 1992 to resolve contentious party political issues, but also to ensure the necessary degree of flexibility within the EC to enable Britain to prevail as a leading European power. In this, the UK's military strength in European terms played a vital role in challenging the effectiveness of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). This was reflected *inter alia* in the French press in late 1991, where British intransigence was viewed as the main obstacle to European political integration.⁴ In this, the Yugoslav crisis may have offered Britain an opportunity to lead, as it were, from the rear. In quelling calls for European intervention, Britain nipped in the bud any European pretensions towards creating a viable CFSP in practice, while at the same time with the aid of the arms embargo ensuring the supremacy of Belgrade against the secessionist republics.

⁴ See, for instance, 'Un geste des Britanniques', *Le Monde* November 14, 1991, p.1, 'La Communauté au pied du mur britannique', *Le Monde*, October 11, p.2, 'L'adhésion de la Grande-Bretagne à la CEE', *Le Monde*, October 27-28, 1991, p.2, and 'Les désaccords sur la politique étrangère et de sécurité', *Le Monde*, December 5, 1991, p.6. Britain's focus was mainly on EC enlargement. In a New Year interview on BBC Radio 4, in early January 1992, the Prime Minister, John Major spoke of the EC extending 'to include Russia at least as far as the Urals'. The Labour Party, despite differences with the Conservatives on a number of EC issues, appeared to concur with this. Its manifesto for the 1992 election declared 'we will make the widening of the EC a priority'.

The EC's practice, during the summer of 1991, of perceiving Serbian President Milosevic in Belgrade as the main Yugoslav interlocutor was less surprising than may appear in retrospect. The Presidency, with four of its eight republican delegates under Serbian control, was based in the Yugoslav capital, as were the diplomatic links. Britain, on the other hand, may have considered the cultivation of a relatively powerful ally on Europe's south-east flank a useful attribute, in military and political terms, not only as a bulwark against German hegemony within Europe (and possibly a *cordon sanitaire* against Islam), but as a foil to EC political and military integration.

British/Serb sympathies are not of recent origin. Support for the small Balkan nations rebelling against the Ottoman Empire emerged during the rule of Gladstone in the 1870s, and more specifically for Serbia during World War I, as evidenced in parliamentary debates.⁵ Much of the literature of the time also reflected a pro-Serb bias, from Robert George Dalrymple Laffan's *The Serbs: The Guardians of the Gate*⁶ to Dame Rebecca West's interwar travelogue, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, a best-seller and, for many, the first introduction to Yugoslavia.⁷ The divisions within Yugoslavia during World War II produced two main pro-Serb traditions in Britain, the monarchist, *Cetnik* movement led by Draza Mihailovic which until 1943 received limited support from the British government, and the Titoist partisan movement, led by Josip

⁵ See, for instance, Vote of Credit, Serbia. *Hansard*, November 11, 1915, Supply-Committee, Land Forces. *Hansard*, December 21, 1915, c.429-430, and Motion for Adjournment. 'no country in the whole of Europe has supported Serbia during this War as we have...it was the British munitions, sent lavishly when we were short...that enabled the Serbians, when they were in the very direst extremity, to succeed in thrusting the invader from their land'. Christmas Recess. *Hansard*, December 23, 1915, c.733.

⁶ Laffan refers to the Serbs as 'never...content to submit to slavery, [they] have unceasingly struggled towards the light', and 'Bosnia and Hertzegovina are Serbian lands'. LAFFAN, R.G.D. *The Guardians of the Gate: Historical Lectures on the Serbs*. Clarendon Press, 1918, republished as *The Serbs: The Guardians of the Gate*. Dorset Press, 1989.

⁷ WEST, Rebecca. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: The Record of a Journey Through Yugoslavia in 1937*, 2 vols. (London 1943) and New York, Viking Press, 1968.

Broz, to which Churchill switched allegiance in September 1943.⁸ Approximately 8,000 Cetniks were resettled in Britain after 1947 and joined the substantial Serb émigré population in Britain. A number became politically active in the 1990s, working through parliament, the media and other sectors of the British establishment.⁹

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The assumption that Britain, or the Major government, in the final decade of the twentieth century was overcome by a 'profoundly conservative philosophical realism'¹⁰ was not evident in statements made by British ministers at the time, however. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd was at pains to clarify the British position in the post Cold War era in the House of Commons and elsewhere.

Sometimes...those in charge of British foreign policy have felt, perhaps, that they were working against the grain of history, against the way in which the world was going. Sometimes the pressures on us to dismantle the British empire were felt to be forcing us to move more quickly than seemed at the time to be safe or sensible...There is no such feeling now. Those of us who try to work for British interests in these areas feel that we are going now with the grain of history. We are at the centre of events. No other country belongs to NATO, the Community, the Commonwealth, the Group of Seven and the United Nations Security Council. We are uniquely central to developments and discussions that I have been talking about. It means

⁸ This led to divisions in Britain between Fitzroy Maclean, Bill Deakin and others who had championed Tito's partisans and *Cetnik* supporters, which sharpened during the early 1990s. Works by BELOFF, Nora, *Tito's Flawed Legacy* and LEES, Michael, *The Rape of Serbia*, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1985 and 1990, respectively, promoted the *Cetnik* legacy in Britain. For Churchill's own account of the switch in policy, see CHURCHILL, Winston S. *The Second World War. Volume Five. Closing the Ring*. London, 1952. pp.360-372.

⁹ For further details of this, and Serb lobbying activities in Britain in the 1990s, see HODGE, Carole. *The Serb Lobby in the United Kingdom*. The Donald W Treadgold Papers. The Henry M Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, 2003, pp.7-8. For specific lobbying activities within the Conservative Party, see also VULLIAMY, Ed and LEIGH, David. *Sleaze: The corruption of parliament*. London, 1997.

¹⁰ This position was taken by Brendan Simms in the only full-length published appraisal of the British role at the time of writing (January 2004). See SIMMS, Brendan. *Unfinest Hour. Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*. Allen Lane, 2001, p.6.

that the merry-go-round of meetings is pretty formidable. It means also that our foreign policy has to be strenuous and energetic...we are well placed to persevere and to succeed.¹¹

In recent years, Britain has punched above her weight in the world. We intend to keep it that way...Britain plays a central role in world affairs. We owe this in part to our history, but we continue to earn it through active diplomacy and a willingness to shoulder our share of international responsibilities.¹²

Britain has traditionally been a 'warrior nation',¹³ and was usually not hesitant in using force. Its special sense of responsibility has been explained as a legacy of imperial times,¹⁴ but it also reflected a priority to retain the UK's privileged Permanent Five position on Security Council, as well as its leading European role in NATO and other international institutions. In light of this, in leading the international consensus not to intervene militarily in Croatia (and later Bosnia), it is improbable that Britain was motivated by what another analyst termed its 'pusillanimous realism'.¹⁵ Neither is it likely to have been guided by 'an acute sense of the limitations of British power', as Simms concluded.¹⁶ A more convincing explanation for Britain's determined stand against other major European powers in 1991, and its unwavering rejection of

¹¹ Douglas Hurd, *Debate on the Address*. *Hansard*, Vol.198, November 1, 1991, c.130.

¹² 'Making the world a safer place: our priorities'. Douglas Hurd, *Daily Telegraph*, January 1, 1992.

¹³ SHARP, Jane. *Honest Broker or Perfidious Albion?* *Institute for Public Policy Research*, 1997, p.4. This was also reflected in UK defence spending. In 1990, Britain spent 4% of its GDP on defence, against a NATO average of 3.1-3.2% *Statement on the Defence Estimates: Britain's defence for the 1990s*. HMSO, London, 1991. p.54, quoted in BELLAMY, Christopher. *Soldier of Fortune: Britain's new military role*. *International Affairs*, 68, 3, 1992, p.54. Bellamy notes that the Labour Party had a similar policy on defence spending levels.

¹⁴ SHARP, *Ibid*.

¹⁵ GOW, James. *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Conflict*. MacMillan, 1996, p.97. Gow argues in this and later works that, while British policy in Bosnia failed, its failure was shared internationally, and resulted from a lack of sufficient will on the part of leading powers and institutions to take the action necessary to end the war.

¹⁶ SIMMS, B. *Unfinest Hour*, *op.cit.* p.7.

effective military intervention during the Bosnian war, was offered by Jane Sharp, senior research fellow at the Centre of Defence Studies, King's College London:

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the main reason Britain did not halt Serb aggression against Bosnia is that policy makers in Whitehall wanted Serbia and its proxies in Bosnia to prevail.¹⁷

According to one British journalist,

the advice from successive British envoys in Belgrade is that without a strong Serbia there will be no stability in the Balkans. In the eyes of the Foreign Office that remains as true today as it did in 1913 and in 1939. Unpopular, unpalatable but undeniable.¹⁸

The motivations of British policy makers are not addressed in any detail here, since to assess the broader objectives of British policy would require study over a longer timescale, and probably over a wider area. This study demonstrates, however, that Britain, for the most part, led an international 'consensus' which, between the summer of 1991 and 1995, benefited the Serb regimes in Belgrade and Pale, respectively, at the expense of the interests of the Bosnian government and other proponents of a multi-cultural society in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and in doing so may have prolonged the war.

¹⁷ SHARP, 1997. *op.cit.* p.8. Sharp somewhat dilutes her conclusion, however, by arguing that Britain had 'no stomach to act unilaterally' in the absence of an American lead. *Ibid.* Indeed, the efforts by British leaders to prevent US military intervention in Bosnia (*vide* US Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to London in May 1993) challenge that theory.

¹⁸ SHERIDAN, Michael. *Independent*, June 3, 1995, quoted in SHARP, *Ibid.* p.8.

CHAPTER 1

CROATIA 1991: ESTABLISHING THE PARAMETERS

Introduction

Decisions taken in 1991 established the main framework for international policy in Yugoslavia and its successor states till NATO took action in Bosnia in late 1995. Most scholars now concur that the international Yugoslav policy failed in 1991.¹ Contrary, however, to those who attribute the failure to the international community as a whole, or to Germany in particular, it is argued here that it was Britain which dominated the international decision-making process, resulting in the reinforcement of the Milosevic regime in Belgrade, and facilitating the maintenance of territorial gains by the Yugoslav People's Army [JNA]² and Serbian paramilitaries in Croatia in the latter half of 1991.

The first part of this chapter examines developments in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [SFRJ] at political, constitutional and economic level, leading up to the war in Croatia, when most international agencies and states, including Britain, supported the survival of the SFRJ as a unitary state. The background to the disintegration of the SFRJ, and the efforts by individual republic leaders to break the impasse created by unitary forces, on the one hand, and would-be secessionists on the other, have particular relevance in

¹ This is supported by a number of official enquiries which have acknowledged varying degrees of international responsibility in failing to exert a credible threat of force in the early stages of the war to bring an end to hostilities, including the Report of the International Commission on the Balkans (1996), the United Nations Srebrenica Report (1999), the French National Assembly Report (2001), and the report by the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation (2002). The EC-brokered Brioni agreement of July 7, 1991, signalled the end of hostilities in Slovenia, but also served to hasten the onset of full-scale war in Croatia.

² Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija.

relation to later assumptions which contributed to shaping the policies of leading world powers in attempting to bring hostilities to an end.

The second part of the chapter comprises a chronological analysis of the international response to developments on the ground after the onset of war, and demonstrates how the divergent positions within Europe during the early part of the war in Croatia gradually coalesced under British guidance, through a series of closely inter-linked policies introduced in the late summer of 1991. These both facilitated and encouraged the control of the war by Serbian elites, headed by President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, and backed by the JNA on the ground.

Reference is made to parliamentary records, and to the positions of other major powers, including the United States, France, Russia, Germany, and the Netherlands as holder of the EC Presidency. Evidence given at House of Commons Select Committee meetings and other fora is also examined, particularly with regard to the commonly-held view that the JNA was acting autonomously, thereby implicitly absolving the Serbian regime of central responsibility for most of the atrocities.

The lack of success of the Hague Peace Conference, chaired by former British foreign secretary Lord Carrington, has often been attributed, not least by Carrington himself, to Germany's 'hasty' recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.³ By contrast, the Vance Plan, involving the despatch of UN troops to Serb-held territory in Croatia, was frequently perceived as the main, and even only, redeeming feature of international policy that year, crucial in bringing the six-month war in Croatia to an end. These positions are critically examined with reference to British ministerial statements, the situation on the ground, and relevant developments in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. The genesis, timing and impact of the Vance Plan are also assessed, both with regard to the situation in Bosnia and the Belgrade regime, with close reference to the memoirs of

³ Interview in NIN, Belgrade, 20 October 1995.

the outgoing SFRJ president, Borisav Jovic, and reports by senior members of the EC Monitoring Mission [ECMM], and Western and Yugoslav media coverage.

Prelude to war

The international response to the rising tensions in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s was muted until January 1991, at which time a number of countries, including Britain, issued a warning to the JNA that military action against individual republics would not be tolerated.⁴

The growing unrest in Yugoslavia in early 1991 posed a dilemma for the international community. Slovenia and Croatia were planning to declare their independence, while the JNA resolved to undertake military measures in defence of the unitary state. In either case, it was recognised that serious consequences would ensue, not only in Yugoslavia but also the Soviet Union where the Baltic republics were threatening to secede, and where a direct confrontation with the JNA might draw in the Soviet army.

In early 1991, international policy was united in attempting to hold Yugoslavia together as a unitary state. But the 'sticks and carrots' approach adopted by the European Community, the United States and Western financial institutions to address the problem failed to take full account of two main factors. Firstly, the Yugoslav Federation was by

⁴ The CIA, in November 1990, had warned of Yugoslavia's probable disintegration, while Conservative MP Peter Fry, leading a parliamentary group to Yugoslavia in late 1990, took a more sanguine view, judging that complete separation was not inevitable, urging work towards a largely self-governing loose confederation, with certain specified powers on a federal basis: "As an encouragement to them, my fellow officers and members of the parliamentary group called on our Government to help admit Yugoslavia to several institutions to give greater credibility to the federal Government ...Unfortunately that opportunity was lost. The Western powers misread the situation...." Croatia, November 13, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.198, c.1202. See also 'Break-up nearer after Milosevic win'. *The Times*, December 12, 1990.

keep Yugoslavia afloat during the Cold War years. By the end of the decade, the rigorous economic reform programme introduced by Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, backed by international financial institutions, was considered the only hope for economic recovery⁶. This programme collapsed virtually within days of Milosevic becoming Serbian president.⁷ The Serbian National Assembly in which his party had acquired 194 of the 250 seats voted secretly to authorise the printing of \$1.4 billion in unauthorised loans to the Republic of Serbia, without federal approval.⁸ Apart from bringing about an instant devaluation of the dinar, it challenged the entire economic reform programme crafted by Markovic.⁹ In the process, federal structures were weakened, and the more prosperous western republics began opting out of financial payments to the federal authorities. Since Slovenia produced a significant percentage of Yugoslavia's export revenue at this time, this dealt a further blow to the economy.¹⁰

⁶ Yugoslavia's total foreign debt was reduced from \$22 billion in 1988 to \$16.5 billion in 1990, with an increase in exports of 9.1% compared with the same period in 1989, and over 2,000 contracts for joint ventures signed with foreign capital by September 1990, estimated at DM 1.5 billion. See 'The End of an Era, New Beginnings?' ANDREJEVICH, Milan. *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, December 20, 1990, p.44.

⁷ For the role of the Serbian media in assisting Milosevic's SPS party to power, see HAYDEN, Robert M 'Politics and the Media', in *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, December 6, 1991, and *Vreme*, June 10, 1991.

⁸ The move hit the headlines of Yugoslav dailies, *Borba* pointing out that it breached the Serbian constitution and damaged Yugoslavia's monetary policy. See 'Udar na monetarni sistem', *Borba*, January 9, 1991. For an account of this episode by the Yugoslav Prime Minister at the time, see transcripts of testimony by Ante Markovic at the Milosevic trial [Milosevic: "Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina" IT-02-54.] *International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [ICTY]*, October 23, 2003, pp.28012-3.

⁹ Some of this revenue is rumoured to have been invested abroad; the rest swelled the coffers of Belgrade's banks in preparation for war. According to Borka Vucic, director of the Beogradska Banka's branch in Nicosia, Cyprus: 'When it was clear to President Milosevic that war in SFRJ was inevitable, and that Serbia too had to introduce a multi-party system, he...took the decision that we should move most of our gold and currency reserves abroad, thus preventing the opposition from keeping a check on our business...With that money we bought arms and food for Serbia, we paid the expenses of our embassies and diplomatic representatives, and through my bank we traded with the world. That money saved Serbia and its leadership...' *Nasa Rec*, Belgrade, August 12, 1996.

¹⁰ Markovic transcripts, *ICTY*. op.cit.

Markovic's reforms worked towards a strengthening of federal structures, with a corresponding reduction of power in the republics. The collapse of the economic reform programme had the reverse effect and, in the economic chaos which ensued, Milosevic was able to expropriate funds from the federal reserves in preparation for war.¹¹

These developments had serious consequences for the working population throughout Yugoslavia, and especially in Serbia. By December 1990, a considerable number of Serbia's industrial workers had been unpaid for months and feared redundancy. Many who voted for Milosevic, the 'socialist' candidate, in the December 1990 elections had done so in the hope that he would guarantee their jobs and social benefits at a time of domestic upheaval and international uncertainty. They soon found this not to be the case, as thousands of firms in Serbia faced bankruptcy by the end of the first quarter of 1991. On 28 January 1991, over 2,000 metal workers went on strike under the slogan: *We voted for you and you deceived us*.¹² The following month, a further 13,000 workers struck in the district of Rakovica, in protest not just about wages but against Serbian government policies, declaring that Milosevic had lost the confidence of the unions that had supported him in the election.¹³ In mid April, some 750,000 workers from the metal, textile and leather industries took to the streets, demanding higher wages and compensation for unpaid work. The Serbian National Assembly agreed to their demands, but the strikers threatened further action would ensue, possibly including the miners, if their requirements

¹¹ Yugoslavia's foreign currency reserves, amounting to over \$9 billion in September 1990, 40% more than in 1989, had dropped to \$8.2 billion immediately following Milosevic's victory in December 1990, due to the loss of confidence in banks, resulting in the large-scale withdrawal of hard currency. *RFE/RL Report*, op.cit. December 20, 1990, p.44.

¹² *Borba*, January 29, 1991.

¹³ *RFE/RL*, op.cit. 18 February 1991. The workers' fears were not unfounded. According to the Yugoslav Accounting Service figures, published on 25 February, 6,500 firms, employing nearly 2 million workers were insolvent at the end of January, with 823 firms in Serbia facing bankruptcy, with over \$1.7 billion unsettled debts overall. *Borba*, February 13, 1991; *Vjesnik*, February 19, 1991, and *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, February 26, 1991, p.52.

were not met promptly.¹⁴ Strikes were not a new phenomenon in Yugoslavia, but in the new pluralist state just weeks after the election they could not be ignored, and even threatened the survival of the Serbian government.

By early 1991, Serbia was effectively in control of four out of the eight republics and provinces represented in the Yugoslav Presidency. The Serbian leadership had stripped the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina of their autonomy granted by Tito under the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 and installed, by means of rent-a-crowds, rigged elections and other political manoeuvres, a Milosevic placeman, Momir Bulatovic, as President of Montenegro.¹⁵ This Serb bloc, with 50% control of the Presidency, was crucial in many respects but especially in relation to the JNA of which the Yugoslav President was also titular Commander-in-Chief. In the space of a couple of years, the intricate devices evolved by Tito since the 1940s to prevent the political domination of Yugoslavia by one ethnic group or republic had been shattered.

During the mass anti-government demonstrations by students and staff of Belgrade and other Serbian universities, and the media and intelligentsia in March 1991, the 8-member Yugoslav Presidency was heavily pressurised by Serbian representatives to sanction the use of the JNA to quell the civilian unrest in Belgrade.¹⁶ In mid-March, Borisav Jovic, the Serbian President of Yugoslavia, resigned due to tensions arising from the refusal by Croatia and Slovenia to disband

¹⁴ *Borba*, April 16, 1991.

¹⁵ See SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* pp. 60-73, for a full account of this.

¹⁶ The divisions within the JNA were apparent at this time. In an interview in *Borba*, Stevan Mirkovic, a former JNA Chief of Staff had warned that the army would be mobilised if necessary, to which the Slovene Commander, Colonel General Konrad Kolsek, retorted that the use of force to arrive at a political settlement to the crisis could result in anarchy, adding that the army was between 'two fires', with some trying to involve it in their political games. *Borba*, March 18, 1991.

their territorial armed forces.¹⁷ On the same day, Milosevic declared on Belgrade television that "under the present circumstances, Serbia will not recognise a single decision by the federal presidency", a move which some Serbian opposition leaders regarded as tantamount to Serbia's secession from the Yugoslav Federation.¹⁸ The outgoing President Jovic then sought, with the full support of Milosevic, to prevent Stipe Mesic, the Croatian incumbent to the rotating presidency leadership, from taking up his seat in May 1991, by creating a deadlock within the Yugoslav presidency.¹⁹ This disrupted the rotational process which had ensured the smooth running of that institution, and left Yugoslavia without either a constitutional or military head.²⁰ The following week Croatia went to the polls, with 94% voting for Croatian sovereignty within a confederal Yugoslavia, President Tudjman having ruled out Croatian secession.²¹

The constitutional deadlock was compounded by a growing political crisis in Croatia. In late August 1990, Croatian Serbs held a referendum in Serb majority areas on Serb "sovereignty and autonomy" in Croatia. Croats living in these areas were barred from participation, and the vote predictably went overwhelmingly in the Serbs' favour. Attempts by the moderate Serbian Democratic Party of

¹⁷ On January 18, it was agreed that Croatia should surrender 20,000 arms. Jovic records a conversation with Milosevic later that day where he gained the impression that Milosevic would have preferred disarmament by force. JOVIC, Borisav. *Poslednji dani SFRJ*. Politika, Belgrade, 1995, p.254. For a full account of the disarming and rearming of the Slovenian and Croatian Territorial Defence forces, see SILBER/LITTLE, op.cit, pp.113-128.

¹⁸ SILBER/LITTLE, op.cit. p.139.

¹⁹ Mesic obtained four votes within the Presidency but was not elected. Interestingly, JNA generals Veljko Kadijevic and Blagoje Adzic supported Mesic, as did most Serbian opposition leaders. See JOVIC, op.cit. May 15, 1991, pp.325, 340 and 346.

²⁰ As Borisav Jovic, then President of the Yugoslav collective Presidency, noted in his diary: 'We have crossed the "Rubicon". We no longer seek decisions from anyone. We act according to need in defence of the Serbian nation. We inform the Presidency about events. Whoever doesn't like it can go home'. JOVIC, op.cit. p.317. [Author's translation]

²¹ RFE/RL, op.cit. May 20, 1991.

Croatia to urge peaceful settlement of the crisis were rejected by the Krajina leaders and, on 21 December 1990, the Serb-dominated Krajina declared itself an autonomous district. On March 16, 1991, Milosevic declared 'Yugoslavia is finished', and that Serbia would no longer be bound by federal presidency decisions.²² On the same day, Krajina declared its separation from Croatia, and Serb forces attempted to consolidate power over predominantly Serb-populated areas. In Pakrac, Serb police took control of a police station, while in Plitvice a busload of Croatian policemen came under attack. The following week, Serbian activists organised a protest meeting in Plitvice National Park and declared it part of the 'Autonomous Province' of Krajina. Local disturbances ensued in Krajina, Slavonia and Baranja, wherever there was either a Serb majority, or large minority. Meanwhile, during the same week, the Serbian National Assembly relieved the Kosovo representative on the Presidency, Riza Sapundxija, of his duties.²³ On 6 May, the JNA generals presented the collective Presidency with an ultimatum. Either the army be permitted to impose martial law, or it would sort out Croatia on its own.²⁴

In an attempt to avert war, a series of YU-summits took place amongst the various republic leaders during the first half of 1991.²⁵ To bridge the growing gap and establish common ground between the confederal model proposed by Slovenia and Croatia and the federal one backed by

²² SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* p.139.

²³ Despite objections by international observers and other Yugoslav politicians, the Assembly elected Sejdo Bajramovic in Sapundxija's place. During May 1991, the crisis in Kosovo deepened, as weapons were distributed to local Serbs in ten Kosovo municipalities. According to a report by the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights in Kosovo that month, in the two previous years since 1989, 90 Albanians had been killed and 300 wounded by Serb police, with some 2,500 sentenced by Serbian courts for political reasons. Nearly 60,000 Albanians lost their jobs during this time. See also 'The Kosovo Boomerang' in MAGAS, *op.cit.* pp. 290-296.

²⁴ *Economist*, May 11, 1991, p.51.

²⁵ For Croatian Serb opposition to Serbia's policy in Croatia at this time, see 'State Presidency Agrees on Measures to Prevent Further Ethnic Violence', ANDREJEVICH, Milan. *RFE/RL Report*, *op.cit.* May 15, 1991, pp.18-20, *Vjesnik*, May 13, 1991, and *Borba*, May 10-11, 1991.

Serbia and Montenegro, the remaining republics, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, proposed a so-called asymmetric solution.²⁶ The ensuing meetings which took place in the respective republic capitals in early 1991 were characterised by verbal duels and open quarrels. The 'asymmetric solution' was a compromise, involving the transformation of Yugoslavia into a union of sovereign states with central authority confined to a national army, common currency, an EC-type common market, a joint parliament and a collective head of state. The proposal was launched on 3 June 1991, following which a four-point accord was reached as the basis for future discussion. The Serbian leadership decided to go along with the proposal verbally in order to avoid isolation, while pursuing its own policies.²⁷ These policies, involving the breakup of Yugoslavia as defined by the 1974 Constitution, had been planned by the Serbian elites well in advance of the Slovene and Croatian declarations of independence in June 1991. Already, on February 25, 1991, Borisav Jovic noted in his diary that

the Serb parties in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia [should] in a combined political and military action overthrow the government first in Croatia and then Slovenia...in the hesitant republics (Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) it is necessary to overthrow the leaderships and/or redirect them [in] activities ...combined with military operations.²⁸

According to Jovic, Milosevic agreed but considered Slovenia should be left out of the equation. Milosevic also spoke out about the necessity to change state borders which, he opined, were 'always decided by the strong, not by the weak', and declared that he had ordered the formation of new police forces. 'If we have to fight we are more than prepared'.²⁹

²⁶ This in some respects echoed the proposals of Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic the previous December, in his 11-point programme, and those of Lord Carrington in October 1991.

²⁷ Jovic noted in his diary: "We decided to shock them: to accept the proposal as a basis for talks...and then slowly evolve our own concept". JOVIC, op.cit. June 5, 1991, p.338.

²⁸ JOVIC, Ibid. pp.276-7. [Author's translation]

²⁹ *NIN*, April 12, 1991 and *Monitor*, October 11, 2002.

largely seen by outsiders as a clash between the Western republics which sought to secede and those which still strove to hold Yugoslavia together, led by Serbia and the Yugoslav Army. So, while there was general condemnation of the methods used by the JNA to bring the breakaway republics to heel, there was also some sympathy for the apparent defenders of what was perceived as the only East European country to have developed 'socialism with a human face'.

Outbreak of war: Slovenia

Just prior to the onset of hostilities in Slovenia, and US Secretary of State James Baker's (un)timely warning to the breakaway republics, America took a back seat, monitoring events from a safe distance.³² EC leaders, on the other hand, welcomed the opportunity for Europe to take a leading role. Initially, the major powers were in general agreement in adopting a so-called 'even-handed' policy. By the time the war had spread through Croatia, however, this policy was recognised as ineffective at best, and divergences began to emerge as to how to address the escalating situation, increasingly seen as a serious potential threat to European security. Options discussed ranged from recognition of the seceding republics (supported by Germany, Austria and Denmark) to wholesale or selective economic sanctions, an arms embargo, and the use of military force to restore peace. The military option began by this time to be favoured by most European powers, albeit with reservations and differing motivations. Although still assuming a relatively low profile at this stage Britain, by the end of July, began to emerge clearly

³² In a letter to incumbent Yugoslav President Stipe Mesic on 3 July, however, US President George Bush partly retracted Baker's comments, indicating that the United States no longer insisted on Yugoslav unity, emphasizing instead the need for re-establishing civilian control over the military. *Le Monde*, July 5, 1991, p.4. On September 25, 1991, at the UN Security Council, Baker sought to distance himself from his earlier remarks.

as a leading opponent of any solution which included the use or threat of external military force.³³

European policy in Yugoslavia during the war in Croatia, however, cannot be divorced from its member states' conflicting national interests, played out in the margins of the Maastricht Summit preparations.³⁴ At this time, most EC members, France and Germany in particular, supported the establishment of a European army, backed by a viable common foreign and security policy, while Britain attempted to block these and other measures designed to bring about a more integrated European security system. The French proposal, first mooted in late July 1991, to despatch a European inter-positional force to Yugoslavia, and supported by most major European states as hostilities escalated, was consistently opposed by Britain until proposed more than three months later, by the Serb-dominated Presidency, by which time Serb forces were in virtual control of nearly a third of Croatia. The tendency to defer to Belgrade became a hallmark of British policy in the region, and shaped international policy in the Balkans for much of the 1990s.

In order to respond to any proposed use of external military force, the Foreign Office embraced new terminology in parliament, at news conferences and elsewhere, to imply that this was either unworkable, or amounted to interference in the internal affairs of another state.³⁵ One British foreign minister even suggested that the JNA might be called to

³³ Britain's position was understandable at this stage, on pragmatic grounds. Northern Ireland was an experience Britain would have been unwilling to repeat in an area not defined as a specific British interest, especially in a leading role (as a major European military power) and without US support on the ground. [Author's discussion with former Defence Secretary, John Nott]

³⁴ See *Le Monde*, July 2, 1991, p.8.

³⁵ Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg asserted 'you've got to have a peace to keep', opposing 'peace by armed force'. *Channel 4 News*, September 16, 1991. Lord Carrington declared that 'you can't impose a solution from outside'. Statement at Igalo Summit, Montenegro, September 18, 1991, and Douglas Hurd confirmed that 'when they are ready for peace we can help monitor it'. *Channel 4 News*, September 19, 1991.

restore order at the onset of hostilities, demonstrating a fundamental misunderstanding of the traditional role of the army in Yugoslavia, but playing into Milosevic's hands.³⁶ Notable also was a sense of lack of urgency amongst ministers in addressing the mounting tensions in the area, as proposals put forward by MPs across the political spectrum met with brief, dismissive comments from foreign ministers.³⁷

In Serbia, meanwhile, Milosevic was becoming increasingly isolated. Jovic, on July 5, recorded the growing tensions as Serbs called for his and Milosevic's resignation. The JNA opposed Milosevic's readiness to agree to Slovenia's independence, and was described as 'disoriented' and 'demoralised', while the Soviet Union was unprepared to offer support.³⁸ Yet Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd refused to be drawn on the culpability of the Serbian leadership in Belgrade.³⁹ He also supported Milosevic's preference to deal with the European Community, once the

³⁶ "...the Yugoslav federal army might have, under the constitution, a role in restoring order if there were widespread civil unrest". Mark Lennox Boyd, MP, *Yugoslavia*, June 27, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.193, c.1138. Multi-ethnic in make-up, albeit with a strong preponderance of Serbs in the officer corps, the JNA had been built up in the postwar anti-fascist movement, and trained for the defence of Yugoslavia's external borders. In civil disputes it was traditionally the police who were called in to restore order. By 1990, however, a new trend had been initiated whereby recruits were trained to guard against the 'internal enemy', namely, those tending not to adhere to the centralist ideals shared by the upper echelons of the JNA. The JNA's traditional role was challenged in the street riots in Belgrade in March 1991, when Milosevic called on the army to quell the demonstrations without the constitutional power to do so, an early indication that the JNA could not necessarily be trusted to act constitutionally in the interests of the SFRJ.

³⁷ Just a month before hostilities broke out, Liberal Democrat MP, Sir Russell Johnston, suggested EC mediation and even the provision of a peace-keeping force. Douglas Hogg replied 'I do not think that the European Community should play such a role. *Oral Answers*, May 22, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.191, c 919. In response to Yugoslav army action in Slovenia, Labour MP Ken Livingstone's proposal for 'firm and total economic sanctions' was dismissed by Douglas Hurd. *Yugoslavia*, July 3, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.194, c332. Hurd also rejected consideration of Slovenian and Croatian independence. 'It is not for the European Community to ...devise a political structure for Yugoslavia...There must be - some effective working relationship - between those peoples but only they can work it out'. *Ibid.*

³⁸ JOVIC, *op.cit.*, pp.364-6. With Slovenian independence, the Serb bloc would be assured of domination of the Federal Presidency. For the same reason, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia opposed Slovenia's secession. *Ibid.*, pp.344-5.

³⁹ Asked whether 'much of the problem in Yugoslavia relates to the intransigence of Belgrade', the Foreign Secretary did not reply. *Yugoslavia*, *Hansard*, *op.cit.* c.332.

CSCE had been dismissed early on as an appropriate forum from which to address the crisis.⁴⁰ When, later that summer, the EC Presidency pressed harder for military intervention in Croatia, the debate transferred to the Hague, at a peace conference chaired by former British foreign secretary Lord Carrington.

The sitting of 3 July 1991 at the House of Commons, confined to just over thirty minutes, was the last opportunity for parliamentary discussion of the escalating crisis in Yugoslavia until the Autumn. Hurd's final comment of note that day confirmed the impression of playing for time conveyed by the Foreign Secretary throughout the debate, and set the tone for the EC's response to the conflict over the crucial months which followed:

It may well be that, after having looked into the abyss the people will want to work together on a new relationship. We cannot be sure of that or impose it but perhaps we can help to create the pause in which such thinking and discussion can take place.⁴¹

Following the EC foreign ministers' meeting just two days later, EC President Hans van den Broek announced officially that recognition of the two Western republics would be suspended for three months.

War in Croatia: July/August 1991

Speaking in the House of Commons just before the Summer parliamentary recess three weeks later, Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg reiterated Britain's non-interventionist stance:

⁴⁰ 'I do not know what further can be achieved under the CSCE machinery, which is why we are not relying exclusively on it'. Douglas Hurd, *Yugoslavia. Hansard*, op.cit. c.333. The CSCE meeting had condemned the JNA action, by 34 votes to 1 (Yugoslavia), prompting the Yugoslav delegates to leave the Chamber.

⁴¹ Douglas Hurd, *Ibid.*

We and our EC partners have restated our readiness if asked to assist in negotiations towards a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis. However, it is for all Yugoslav parties to decide on the future military arrangements for their country.⁴²

To observers in Belgrade, these statements by one of Europe's strongest military powers, and a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, mindful of the imbalance of weaponry, could have been interpreted as giving the green light to the JNA to continue with its offensive.

In August, a number of EC initiatives took place. A visit by the EC Troika to Belgrade attempted to extend the EC Monitoring Mission (ECMM), already in Slovenia, to Croatia.⁴³ The closely-worded text defining the ECMM in Croatia reflected the compromise amongst the Twelve, resulting from British 'caution'.⁴⁴ But even so, it was rejected by Milosevic.⁴⁵ Dutch EC President Van den Broek was amongst the first to identify the main responsibility for failure.⁴⁶ France, too, recognised Milosevic as the main stumbling block in the peace talks. The contrasting views of the French and British governments at the time

⁴² Douglas Hogg, *Hansard*. Vol.195, July 24, 1991, c.638.

⁴³ The French group leader of the ECMM, George-Marie Chenu, later described it as 'une mission borgne et sourde d'une oreille' ['a blind mission, and deaf in one ear']. CHENU, George-Marie Chenu, from *Derniere Guerre Balkanique?* ed. COT, Jean, L'Harmattan, 1996, p.93. 'The morale of our group of observers could not sink much lower. It didn't seem like we were fulfilling any useful function. The British who controlled the working group were always counseling caution.' Ibid. p.95. [Author's translation]

⁴⁴ COT, ed. op.cit. p.95, and WYNAENDTS, Henry. *L'Engrenage*. Denoel, France, 1993, pp. 61 & 79, Wynaendts notes that Britain insisted on 'an effective ceasefire' before the deployment of EC monitors in Croatia.

⁴⁵ Milosevic, fearing Serbian isolation, eventually agreed to the EC monitoring mission in Croatia on September 1, following a visit to Belgrade by Van den Broek. WYNAENDTS, H, Ibid. pp.74-77.

⁴⁶ 'Yugoslavia faces tragedy and catastrophe...talks have foundered because on a number of vital elements the agreement of one party is lacking...it is not difficult for those who followed our work here to recognise who stonewalled our mission'. *Le Monde*, August 6, 1991, p.3.

were reflected in the respective press reports of the Troika failure in Belgrade.⁴⁷

France, now supported by Germany, renewed its call for a peace-keeping force to be sent to Croatia and, with Belgium (then a non-Permanent Member of the Security Council), suggested that the issue be placed before the UN Security Council.⁴⁸ During the same week, at a meeting of EC foreign ministers, Britain, the only other EC country with Permanent Membership on the Security Council, vetoed the use of force. Following a warning from Russia that military intervention would mean a 'European war', other EC ministers also temporarily retreated, reverting to non-military options.⁴⁹ On August 8, at a CSCE meeting in Prague, it was proposed to apply pressure on the Serbs through the selective supply of aid, which had been frozen the previous month. Germany, meanwhile, was pressing for international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, which was later to prove one of the most contentious issues of the war. At the time, however, Germany had little support within the EC, other than from Denmark. By late August, matters had once again come to a head. The Soviet coup of August 20 had failed, and pressure from Russia, itself in political turmoil, diminished.⁵⁰ Even so, at an EC foreign ministers' meeting days later,

⁴⁷ While, in *Le Monde*, a front page headline declared: 'Serbia made the EC mission fail', the *Financial Times* referred to the failure of the peace mission as 'showing up the flaws', thereby minimising the growing consensus within the EC for a firmer approach, including military force. The FT editorial also argued that there was "no clear demarcation line" for deployment. *Financial Times*, August 5 & 6, 1991, and *Le Monde*, August 6, 1991.

⁴⁸ See 'Europa je nemocna', *Borba*, August 9, 1991, p.6; CHENU, J, in Cot, ed. op.cit. p.94, *Le Monde*, August 3, 1991, p.4, and *Borba*, August 3-4, 1991, p.10. France held the presidency of the UN Security Council at this time.

⁴⁹ *Financial Times*, August 7, 1991, p.1. The French foreign minister persisted, suggesting that the grounds should be laid for a WEU force, while an unnamed British official stated that 'while there is no peace to keep, what we would have would be an opposed landing by troops from EC member states'. *Financial Times*, August 8, 1991, p.7.

⁵⁰ At the outset of the Yugoslav crisis, Soviet President Gorbachev and US President George Bush shared the EC wish for Yugoslavia to remain a unitary state, not least to present Soviet republics using developments in Yugoslavia as a precedent. Following the coup in Moscow, Soviet leaders

Douglas Hurd countered dissatisfaction voiced at the EC's ineffectiveness, stressing that the West could not sort out Yugoslavia's problems.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Serb lobby in Britain had been activated. At the end of August, the Duke of Somerset, Henry Bellingham MP,⁵² and prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate John Kennedy, visited Serbia and Montenegro.⁵³ The two-hour meeting with Milosevic, although covering a wide range of issues, did not refer to the position of Kosovo's Albanians.⁵⁴ Neither, reportedly, did the delegates visit any other Yugoslav republics.⁵⁵ John Kennedy was subsequently to play a major role in organising Serb-funded trips to Serbia and Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia for British members of parliament.⁵⁶

September: the establishment of policy parameters

September 1991 marked a turning point in the involvement of the European Community in the Balkans, when Britain moved to fix the policy parameters. In that month, crucial decisions were reached, with Britain at the forefront, which determined the course of the war in former Yugoslavia and shaped the basis for international policy till the US-led NATO air strikes of September 1995.

had no clear Balkans policy and, hopeful of western investment, tended to support positions held within other major European capitals.

⁵¹ *Borba*, August 28, 1991, p.15, & August 29, 1991, p.14.

⁵² Henry Bellingham was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Defence, 1992-97.

⁵³ *Borba*, August 27, 1991, p.1.

⁵⁴ *Borba*, August 29, 1991, p.8.

⁵⁵ *Borba*, August 30, 1991, p.7.

⁵⁶ For John Kennedy's role in promoting the Serb cause see HODGE. *The Serb Lobby*, op.cit., and *Vreme International*, February 6, 1995, pp.36-38.

On September 13, the Chair of the Hague Conference, Lord Carrington, in conversation with EC President Hans Van den Broek, opined that the Croatian and Slovenian leaders should be dissuaded from the belief that the EC would intervene militarily.⁵⁷ Carrington persuaded Van den Broek to exert pressure on Croatia, which he considered the more aggressive side at that point. Van den Broek reportedly did so, but was not dissuaded from his intention to propose the introduction of a peacekeeping force into Croatia.⁵⁸

On September 18, at a crucial meeting of EC foreign ministers, however, Britain vetoed the use of military force to end the conflict. The EC President's initiative, to despatch a European inter-positional force of up to 30,000 troops to Croatia to establish the conditions for peace, was quashed following a reportedly stormy exchange of views.⁵⁹ A single-line communiqué followed: 'No military intervention contemplated'.⁶⁰ The Dutch initiative had been supported by all major EC member states apart from Britain, which had nevertheless managed to swing the 'consensus'.⁶¹ At a WEU meeting the following day, the British Minister for the Armed Forces, Archie Hamilton, argued that, with the

⁵⁷ Referring to the Slovene and Croatian requests, Carrington reportedly commented 'You're living in another planet'. *Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD)*, Part 1, Chapter 1.

⁵⁸ The Netherlands was also prepared to contribute personnel and equipment to the operation. See *NIOD*, *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Later interviewed by the *NIOD*, the former Dutch Premier Wim Kok referred to Van den Broek's frustration with EC reluctance to move to a more active position on Yugoslavia. *NIOD*, *op.cit.* Part 1, Chapter 2. 'The War in Croatia and the Western Reaction'.

⁶⁰ ZAMETICA, John. *International Institute for Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper, No.71, 1992. See also BENNETT, Christopher. *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, Hurst, 1995, p.176, and SHARP, Jane M O. 'Honest Broker or Perfidious Albion', *op.cit.* pp.11-12.

⁶¹ Confirming this at the first House of Commons sitting on Yugoslavia after the Summer recess, Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg stated: 'The views of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary have been of immense influence within the council of Foreign Ministers. I suspect that on every substantial matter he has been leading the consensus'. Douglas Hogg, *Yugoslavia*, October 14, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.196, c.47. See also Douglas Hurd's view on reaching decisions within the Council of Ministers in *Debate on the Address*, November 1, 1991. *Hansard*, Vol.198, c.124.

deployment of a peacekeeping force, the EC would be 'sucked into a quagmire'.⁶² The rejection of the military option by the EC prompted three other countries, Canada, Australia and Austria to request that the UN intervene.⁶³ Such an appeal to the UN had earlier been made by the Yugoslav President, Stipe Mesic, and was now also endorsed by France, Germany and Italy.⁶⁴

The highly publicised meeting called by Lord Carrington the previous day with the Serbian and Croatian presidents and federal defence minister Veljko Kadijevic at Igalo, Montenegro, may have been influential in the EC rejection of force. After four hours of negotiations, a ceasefire was agreed, but was violated days later, as the JNA called up reserves and territorial defence units in Vojvodina.⁶⁵ It was a weak agreement, and lacked specificity.⁶⁶ The timing of the ceasefire agreement, however, reached just a day before high level EC and WEU summits in Brussels,

⁶² *NIOD*, op.cit. The Dutch report records strong pressure from other countries to shift the British position. France wanted to send 20-30,000 troops, of which France would provide a quarter, but Douglas Hurd was recorded as opining that Yugoslavia was not worth the life of a single British soldier. The UK offered a possible contribution of 100 medical staff.

⁶³ *Time International*, September 30, 1991, p.12.

⁶⁴ *Borba*, 20 September 1991, p.15, and *RFE/RL Report, Weekly Record of Events*. September 23, 1991. The following month, Germany and France also unveiled a new European defence initiative, whereby French and German forces would become the nucleus of a WEU force, a proposal opposed by Britain, but reportedly welcomed by Spain, Italy, Belgium and Greece, and by the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors. *Le Monde*, October 17 & 18, 1991. For Mesic's request, see 'Zagabria chiede l'intervento dell'Onu'. *Il Sole 24 Ore*, September 14, 1991.

⁶⁵ *RFE/RL Report, Ibid.* September 27, 1991. A Foreign Office memorandum described the events somewhat differently. 'On September 17, Lord Carrington brokered a further ceasefire agreement at Igalo. This collapsed by 1 October, but a further ceasefire agreed in The Hague on 9 October seemed to have a better chance of holding.' Recent developments in Eastern Europe with special reference to Yugoslavia. Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (CE 17), dated October 11, 1991, published by The Foreign Affairs Committee, November 6, 1991, p.15 [14]. This, from an official British source, totally misrepresented the situation, and exaggerated the degree of success of the Hague Conference.

⁶⁶ GOW, James. *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, op.cit. p.54. Also see GOW, James and SMITH, D.D. *Peacekeeping, Peacemaking: European Security and the Yugoslav Wars. Brassey's for the Centre for Defence Studies*, London, 1992, pp.164-172.

along with the wide publicity it generated, may have sufficed to deter foreign ministers, many of whom may have felt less well-placed to make such critical decisions than the current and former British foreign secretaries, one of them also a former NATO Secretary General.

It has often since been argued that Europe was not in a position at that time to raise a European force of any size. Yet, an endorsement by Britain of the EC initiative threatening military action would have sent an unequivocal signal to Milosevic that Europe was united in giving serious consideration to all options to end the war, at a time when, in the absence of general mobilisation, the JNA was losing confidence in its ability to hold the frontlines. Instead, through the declared policy of the EC to reject the use of force, Milosevic evidently took his cue.⁶⁷ During the week following the EC communiqué, hundreds of tanks, armoured personnel carriers, trucks and heavy weapons set off on a 20-mile military convoy from Belgrade towards the Croatian border, and the Serb-led JNA launched a three-pronged offensive. Seven Adriatic ports had previously been blockaded, cutting off most of Dalmatia and the islands from the capital. Dubrovnik came under siege by Serbian and Montenegrin forces for the first time in its history, with heavy shelling of several Croatian towns, including Vukovar. On 28 September, after a mortar attack on one of its convoys, the International Red Cross temporarily suspended its work in Croatia. The scene was now set in Croatia for the takeover of nearly one third of its territory, while in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina tensions between Serbs and non-Serbs were mounting, with the formation of four 'Serbian Autonomous Regions' (SAOs), along with a Belgrade-orchestrated operation to arm Serbs in areas where they formed a majority, or a sizeable minority.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ For a French view on Britain's torpedoing of the proposal for an intervention force in September 1991, see Daniel Vernet: 'Franco-British disagreements', in *Le Monde*, June 6, 1995, p.2.

⁶⁸ The operation known as RAM, was organised from Belgrade by SPS member, Mihalj Kertes, to distribute arms to Serb communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in secret lorry convoys. See GLENNY, Misha. *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, (3rd edition) pp.150-151, Penguin, 1996. See also Prime Minister Markovic's accusation of Milosevic for complicity with the JNA in the RAM operation, towards the creation of a Greater Serbia. *Le Monde*, October 2, 1991, p.4.

The crucial EC decision, not to intervene militarily, was one of four inter-linked policies adopted during that month which shaped the role of Europe in the Balkans till late August 1995. In the second, an arms embargo imposed on all republics of Yugoslavia, Britain was again a leading player. During the week following the Council of Ministers' meeting, the UN Security Council imposed a mandatory arms embargo on all weapons and military equipment to Yugoslavia. UNSCR 713, the first of hundreds of Security Council resolutions on former Yugoslavia, was adopted on 25 September 1991. It is unlikely, however, that this resolution would have passed without a veto, at least from China, had not the then Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Budimir Loncar, personally requested it. Loncar's statement, together with a letter from the Yugoslav Representative to the UN, was specifically noted in the resolution, as well as statements made by some Security Council members.⁶⁹ It was from Britain, however, that the suggestion to Loncar to request the arms embargo emanated.⁷⁰ Britain also, amongst the western powers, was to argue most consistently for its maintenance throughout the war. The imbalance of weaponry as a result of that resolution, later gave rise to sharp divergences internationally, and amongst UN Security Council Members. The JNA, its considerable arsenal built up since World War II was, by the Summer of 1991, mostly composed of Serb and Montenegrin officers and conscripts. Croatia, on the other hand, with its territorial army largely disarmed by the JNA the previous year, was unequipped to mount a credible defence against the fourth largest army in Europe.⁷¹ The arms embargo became one of the main linchpins of international policy. Fiercely defended by Britain and

⁶⁹ UN Doc. S/23069.

⁷⁰ See GOW, James. 'British Perspectives', in *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Conflict*, ed. Alex Danchev and Thomas Halverson. Macmillan Press, 1996, pp.92-3.

⁷¹ See *Le Monde*, October 5, 1991, p.3. for Slovenian President Kucan's argument that the embargo discriminated in favour of Serbia in what he termed a war of conquest, not a civil or interethnic conflict.

many other European states, it impeded any meaningful attempt by Croatia (and later Bosnia) at self-defence. And yet, ironically, it was only after the imposition of the arms embargo that the heavy bombardment of much of Croatia got into full swing.⁷² From then onwards, Croatian policy went officially on the offensive. The 'National Croatian Guard' became the 'Croatian Army', and JNA barracks across Croatia were blockaded, with Croatian President Tudjman insisting on the Army's full withdrawal from Croatia.

A third component of international policy instituted in September 1991 was the Hague Peace Conference. In a BBC interview before its launch Conference Chairman Lord Carrington gave a clear indication of his approach to the conflict:

If we're going to get a solution to this, first of all we've got to have a ceasefire. Then we've got to get around the table and listen to the points of view of each of the republics to get an accommodation that is acceptable to everybody.⁷³

Carrington's recommendation that an 'evenhanded' approach be adopted allowed the Serb forces the time to acquire further territory to use as bargaining chips with the same international leaders who had created (wittingly or unwittingly) the manoeuvring space in the first place.⁷⁴ For so long as one side rejected a settlement, none would be implemented, and in the absence of a settlement the capture of territory could continue with impunity. This approach allowed for interminable

⁷² The head of the EC Monitoring Mission, Henry Wynaendts, records the impotence of the EC Mission in the last week of September 1991, as they witnessed the bombardment of Osijek, Vinkovci, Vukovar, Novska, Sisak, Gospic, Zadar, Split and the environs of Dubrovnik. WYNAENDTS, H. op.cit. p.102.

⁷³ Lord Carrington, *BBC TV. Nine O'Clock News*. September 4, 1991.

⁷⁴ The 'evenhanded approach' was further legitimized by academics. London University Balkans specialist Mark Wheeler, for instance, painted a picture of chaos: "What's going on in Yugoslavia now is warlordism, lords of the valley...carving out little empires for themselves. These people are not going to be subordinated to anybody's command." *BBC News*, September 4, 1991.

prevarication, as well as providing a pretext for rejecting international military intervention. Also, if one side of the conflict had an overwhelming military preponderance, the results were predictable.⁷⁵

Britain's role in all this, however, contrary to the claims of some analysts, was not wholly ingenuous.⁷⁶ Britain appointed the two main EC negotiators, Lords Carrington and Owen, who between them fronted EC policy from 1991-95, and included a small secretariat from the Foreign Office. The so-called EC negotiating team was allegedly run from Britain, a practice which continued when David Owen took over chairmanship of the Conference from Lord Carrington, deferring more often to London than Brussels. In late May 1995 Owen, overcome by European and especially American opposition, finally retired from the scene to make way for Carl Bildt, a former Swedish Prime Minister, and close friend of the then Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev who could be relied on to continue the diplomatic line established by Britain in 1991.⁷⁷

The role of Lord Carrington's Conference in facilitating Serb territorial gains should not be under-estimated. It may have appeared benignly bungling most of the time, as one ceasefire after another collapsed. But it also conveyed the impression that Europe was working collectively in seeking to resolve the crisis and, crucially, it preempted alternative initiatives. It also lay the grounds for ethnic partition, ratified in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Also, Slobodan Milosevic, despite his track record as the prime mover behind all the wars in former Yugoslavia, had

⁷⁵ See DEBIE, Franck, in COT [ed.] op.cit. pp.47-82, on the peace negotiations, and for an incisive analysis of international diplomacy during this time.

⁷⁶ James Gow, for instance, concludes that British policy, 'although less than glorious and, in the end, a failure' shared these qualities with other major international players, attributing Britain's opposition to combat troops to a 'lack of will'. GOW, James. *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, op.cit. Brendan Simms, while fiercely critical of Britain's role in Bosnia, nonetheless argues that it was largely an error based on 'profoundly conservative philosophical realism' or 'a particularly disabling form of conservative pessimism'. SIMMS, op.cit. p. 6 & xi.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 5 for Bildt's briefing at the Foreign Office, prior to his appointment.

been rehabilitated and become tacitly regarded as the Western community's principal 'peace-broker' in the region.

A fourth component of British policy underpinned the other three policy strands. Despite being a major European diplomatic and military power and a 'P5' Member of the UN Security Council, Britain could not be certain of maintaining its dominant role in Europe's Balkans policy without the backing of another major European power, especially as the majority of EC states favoured the military option. France, with its powerful army, its traditionally ambivalent foreign policy approach, and a historical affinity to the Serbs, was the obvious partner.⁷⁸ Surprisingly, however, French President Mitterand did not seem to be acting predictably on the Yugoslav crisis.⁷⁹ Slobodan Milosevic in July 1991 had viewed with dismay the bid by French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, to send a European peacekeeping force to Yugoslavia.⁸⁰ Indeed, France's determination to activate the mechanism of the Western European Union through a military operation in Croatia, was still evident after the defeat of the Dutch initiative in mid-September, as France, together with Germany appealed to the United Nations towards the end of that month for help in sending a force into Yugoslavia, with similar initiatives from Canada, Australia and Austria.⁸¹ The Foreign Office evidently saw a possible way around this problem, however. Fitzroy Maclean, respected World War II veteran and friend of

⁷⁸ See interview with former French foreign minister, Herve de Charette. May 10, 2001. *Assemblée Nationale. Rapport d'information déposé en application de l'article 145 du règlement par la mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica, November 22, 2001.*

⁷⁹ Mitterand was otherwise known to have Serb sympathies. See, for instance, *L'Annee des adieux*, Paris, Flammarion, 1995, p.84.

⁸⁰ See CANIVEZ, P. in COT, ed., op.cit. p.189.

⁸¹ See *Le Monde*, September 21, 1991, and *Time magazine*, 'Flash of War', September 30, 1991, p.11-12. The Netherlands, too, raised the issue again, offering four options to a meeting of WEU ministers, ranging from logistical support for the EC monitors to a force of up to 30,000 troops. WEU member states continued with contingency plans for a peacekeeping force. Douglas Hurd, however, announced he could not foresee any conditions under which Britain or other EC powers would intervene militarily in Yugoslavia. See SHARP, Jane M O, op.cit. p.11.

Yugoslavia, travelled to Belgrade in late August 1991 to meet JNA generals Kadujevic and Brovet. He advised them that France was the key to resolving the Yugoslav crisis and that, although currently vacillating, it should be encouraged to support Britain in curbing Germany which was viewed as supporting Croatia, in order to achieve conditions for a ceasefire and political solution.⁸² According to former Yugoslav President Borisav Jovic, Kadujevic informed Maclean that the best outcome would be a united Yugoslavia or, alternatively, a smaller state comprising Serbia, Montenegro and whoever else wished to join, in order to arrest German domination of the Balkans.⁸³ Shortly afterwards, Milosevic went to visit President Mitterand at the Elysee who explained that France's reluctance to support Serbia fully had been out of domestic considerations.⁸⁴ Mitterand advised Milosevic to accept the European arbitration process.⁸⁵ Weeks later, France and Britain were working in tandem on all major Balkans policy issues, an alliance which endured until May 1995, and one which Douglas Hurd in particular valued. When Jacques Chirac took over the French Presidency, he put his own stamp on France's Balkans policy, leading to an Anglo-French clash on Balkans policy, such as had not arisen in four years. Within weeks of Chirac's arrival at the Elysee, Douglas Hurd resigned.

⁸² Author's conversation with Sir Fitzroy Maclean, Glasgow, January 1996. Borisav Jovic records that Fitzroy Maclean went to Yugoslavia at Lord Carrington's request, where he met generals Kadujevic and Brovet in the presence of the British Ambassador, and told them that a ceasefire would be difficult to secure if the Germans, who supported Croatia, were not stopped. According to Jovic "Maclean's message is: To resolve the Yugoslav question, France which is currently vacillating, is important. It is necessary to try to get France to support Britain, in order that they can together stop the Germans, who would in turn stop the Croats, creating the conditions for a ceasefire and political solution." JOVIC, op.cit. p.384. [Author's translation]

⁸³ Maclean's visit may have lent Jovic the confidence he needed for his later attack on German policy. On October 21 Jovic, and other Serbian politicians and writers, accused Germany of trying to achieve today in the Balkans what it was not able to accomplish in two world wars. Veljko Kadujevic's memoirs indicate an almost pathological fear of a Fourth Reich in the Balkans. KADIJEVIC, Veljko. *Moje Vidjenje Raspada*, Politika, Beograd, 1993, p.24.

⁸⁴ *Borba*, August 30, 1991, p.1& 2. 'Stavovi vrlo podudarni' [Very similar viewpoints]

⁸⁵ JOVIC, op.cit. pp.384-5.

The Carrington Peace Plan

The Carrington Plan was a last-ditch attempt to hold Yugoslavia together, albeit within a loose confederation. It depended, however, on acceptance by the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, whose approval Lord Carrington was at pains to secure before it was presented for acceptance by the six republics. At a meeting with Lord Carrington on October 4, also attended by Yugoslav Defence Minister, Veljko Kadijevic and Croatian President Tudjman, Milosevic agreed in principle to all three main points of Carrington's proposals which were to be presented to the six republics on October 18, namely, (i) a loose association of sovereign or independent states; (ii) the protection of minorities, human rights with possible special status for some areas,⁸⁶ and (iii) no unilateral border changes. The irony was that the proposal, based on confederal lines, was very similar to that proposed by the Bosnian and Macedonian leaders in the months preceding the conflict.⁸⁷ If Milosevic had rejected a confederal arrangement earlier, however, he was unlikely to accept one with nearly a third of Croatian territory under the control of Belgrade. In the meantime, Dubrovnik came under total siege, Vukovar was heavily bombarded, and the presidential palace in Zagreb shelled by the JNA whilst parliament was in session. By the time Carrington's plan was placed before the republic leaders, Serb forces were in control of large swathes of Croatia.

The tide was beginning to turn against the Serbian leader, however. He could not accept the peace proposals because the provisions, albeit generous to Serbs in Croatia, applied throughout Yugoslavia, and

⁸⁶ The 'special status' agreement for certain areas was proposed by Milosevic, and taken up by Carrington. WYNAENDTS, *op.cit*, p.120. Inspired by the Alto Adige agreement reached between Italy and Austria, the special status terms went far further, ensuring demilitarisation of those areas under international supervision., *Ibid.* p.124.

⁸⁷ Milosevic's closest adviser at the time, the former President of Yugoslavia, Borisav Jovic, records in his diary that the proposal offered by Izetbegovic and Gligorov was 'stupid and unworkable'. JOVIC, *op.cit*, p.338.

Milosevic could not accept reciprocity. Kosovo was particularly problematic since Milosevic had built his power base there. With the restoration of Kosovo's autonomy, Milosevic's earlier pledges to Kosovo's Serbs would be rendered meaningless. Having publicly proclaimed Kosovo as the 'heartland' of the Serbs, if the myth were to be abandoned out of political expediency, Milosevic risked putting himself out of office. Also the 3-month moratorium on the issue of independence for the western republics had expired and Germany, in light of the Conference collapse, was pressing harder for international recognition for Croatia and Slovenia. Incorporated into the Peace Conference, moreover, was the Franco-German sponsored Badinter Arbitration Commission⁸⁸ which, after Serbia's rejection of the EC peace plan, was instructed to draw up recommendations on independence for all republics who wished it.

Montenegro was the most serious problem, however. In breaking ranks with Serbia, and accepting the Carrington Plan, Montenegrin President Momir Bulatovic, Milosevic's placeman in Montenegro, had presented Serbia with a serious problem. Montenegro's departure from the Yugoslav federation would render Serbia landlocked. Equally, Serbia's bid to retain the name of Yugoslavia together with its assets, including the army and its arsenal, and other hitherto commonly owned investments, was only possible if a minimum of two republics remained in the Federation.⁸⁹ Referenda in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia had already indicated a majority vote for independence if Croatia and Slovenia seceded. Montenegro was therefore vital to the equation.

Then there was the international dimension. US Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, who had previous business connections with Belgrade,⁹⁰ had advised the Serbian leadership that America was

⁸⁸ STARK, Hans, 'Histoire immediate de la guerre yougoslave', in COT, [ed.] op.cit. p.39.

⁸⁹ See JOVIC, op.cit. p.405.

⁹⁰ For Eagleburger's background, see GLYNNE, Patrick in *The New Republic*, February 1992, and GUTMAN, Roy. *Witness to Genocide*. Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1993, pp.24-5.

taking a back seat on the conflict. But the United States was concerned that the conflict should not escalate, and had made clear its intention to impose full economic sanctions on Serbia, should it attempt to create a Greater Serbia on the principle of "all Serbs in one state".⁹¹ It was also clear to Milosevic that the patience of the European Community could not hold out for much longer. While Lord Carrington continued to insist that any proposed settlement had to have the full agreement of all parties involved, the EC President Hans van den Broek set a 2-month deadline to reach a peace settlement, after which recognition for Slovenia and Croatia would be considered.⁹² The Soviet Union, hitherto Serbia's closest ally on the UN Security Council, was itself in the process of disintegration, with the Baltic States and Ukraine seeking independence. Like the US, Russia did not wish to become directly involved in the crisis.⁹³ President Gorbachev was also unable to reassure Serbia that the Soviet Union would veto a UN economic blockade, or even military measures.⁹⁴

On the domestic front, Milosevic was under considerable pressure from the army which had been humiliated over Tudjman's blockade of JNA barracks in Croatia, and was struggling to hold onto Western Slavonia, from which most Serbs had already fled.⁹⁵ On 25 October, a week after Serbia's rejection of the peace plan, General Veljko Kadijevic, caught in

⁹¹ JOVIC, op.cit. p.395-8. Following the JNA shelling of Zagreb and the takeover of federal organs by the rump Serb presidency, the United States recognised the Serbs as the main aggressors, US Secretary of State James Baker condemning the Serbs for a 'bloodbath', in a shift from his earlier position in June. *Le Monde*, October 9, 1991, p.3.

⁹² *RFE/RL Report*, op.cit., October 17 & 25, 1991. This is confirmed by the Dutch Srebrenica Report which, however, comments that the phone call from Van den Broek to Carrington to steer towards a comprehensive peace agreement in two months was 'absolutely ridiculous'. *NIOD*, op.cit. p.18.

⁹³ Gorbachev did, however, intervene to reprimand the JNA following the bombing of Zagreb, in a departure from Russia's traditional pro-Serb sympathies. *RFE/RL*, Ibid. October 7 & 18, 1991.

⁹⁴ JOVIC, op.cit., p.401.

⁹⁵ See *Le Monde*, October 1, 1991, p.3, for JNA desertions.

the crossfire between the Serbian army officers and the conscripts, on the one hand, and Serbia's political leaders on the other, again pleaded with Jovic for the full mobilisation of Serbia (250,000 troops).⁹⁶ Kadijevic had hoped to raise five brigades for the Western Slavonia campaign, but only managed one and a half,⁹⁷ and warned Jovic that, if the army continued to be left short of infantry, his troops in Western Slavonia would march fully armed on Belgrade to settle accounts with the political leaders responsible for their predicament.⁹⁸ Kadijevic made it clear, moreover, that his own sympathies lay with the soldiers.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, further funds had to be secured to pay for the war. The Yugoslav Treasury was accordingly given instructions to transfer \$100 million from the National Bank of America to the National Bank of China, in the case of an economic blockade. This move was rejected after US Ambassador Warren Zimmerman referred the matter to Prime Minister Ante Markovic who ordered the instructions to be cancelled.¹⁰⁰ This was perhaps the last effective measure of Markovic's premiership.

World opinion was by now becoming increasingly focused on the plight of Dubrovnik, and in late 1991 a number of petitions were sent to international institutions, from Nobel Laureates, French writers, philosophers, orthodox theologians, and other prominent personalities.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council

⁹⁶ Kadijevic attributed the JNA failure to hold the front in Western Slavonia to the Serb reluctance to fight in Croatia. See KADIJEVIC, Veljko. *op.cit.* pp.138 & 143.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p.138.

⁹⁸ See JOVIC, *op.cit.* pp.403-6. For the Bosnian and Macedonian decision not to send conscripts outside their own republics, see *Le Monde*, August 23, p.10, and October 2, 1991, p.4, for deep divisions within the Serb ranks, due to poor working conditions, low morale and lack of training.

⁹⁹ The response amongst Serbian reservists to mobilisation at the time was around 30%, while in Belgrade and Novi Sad, 80% of reservists resisted the call up. HARTMAN, Florence. *Milosevic, la diagonale du fou*. Denoel, 1999, p.179.

¹⁰⁰ See JOVIC, *op.cit.* p.403.

¹⁰¹ *Le Monde*, November 22, 1991, p.4, November 27, 1991, p.2, and December 6 1991, p.2.

of Europe passed a resolution calling upon member states 'to consider recognising those republics which have declared independence', and considering that 'the continued massive use of violence in Yugoslavia, which could easily spill over into neighbouring countries, must be considered as a threat to international peace and security within the meaning of Article 39 of the UN Charter'.¹⁰² The Council also appealed to member states 'to ask the UN Security Council, under the appropriate articles, to consider sending an effective military force to Yugoslavia in order to secure a cease-fire and a sensible solution to the future of Yugoslavia and its republics'.¹⁰³

In the first House of Commons sitting on Yugoslavia in Britain since July, however, Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg did not refer to the position taken by international institutions, groups and individuals across Europe for international action to stop the war, that the conflict was considered a potential threat to European security, or that Britain was alone amongst major European powers in opposing any form of military action.¹⁰⁴ Instead, he drew a picture of a state in the throes of near anarchy, its authority being flouted by irregulars on both sides fighting for their own narrow interests. The House was also not informed about the military misbalance on the ground.¹⁰⁵ Hogg acknowledged that the crisis had deepened, and that the Yugoslav army were bombarding civilian targets, but he did not condemn this. Instead, he concluded that

¹⁰² *Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly*, Resolution 969. 13th Session, September 21, 1991, 6 & 8.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ See *Le Monde*, October 2, 1991, p.4, for Britain's obstruction of modest proposals to enable the EC monitors to be more effective.

¹⁰⁵ A question one week later by Liberal backbencher David Alton, enquiring about military weapons and equipment available to the respective sides, met with the response that a comprehensive answer would involve disproportionate expense and the use of confidential information *Written Answers*, October 21, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.196, c.350.

the only solution that can last is a political one, freely reached among the Yugoslavs themselves. There is no military solution to this problem, let alone one imposed from outside...we cannot use our forces to separate the combatants.¹⁰⁶

He also stated military intervention would not be used by Britain's 'European partners', an indication of the British government's confidence in its ability to overrule, or dissuade, other European powers. Coming from a 'P5' Member of the Security Council, moreover, it could be construed as encouragement to Serbia to continue its military campaign.

One of the measures increasingly feared in Belgrade was an oil embargo. In November 1991, Borisav Jovic made a special trip to China to secure Beijing's backing at the UN Security Council against an oil embargo.¹⁰⁷ When the matter was raised in the Commons, however, Hogg stated:

we do not think it would have an early effect because the JNA has substantial reserves of oil...the main source of supply is Greece, which has made it plain that she would have considerable difficulties with interfering with that oil supply, certainly without the authority of the United Nations.¹⁰⁸

It was only the following year, after the conflict had spread to Bosnia, that Serbia's access to oil imports was acknowledged as having fuelled the conflict.¹⁰⁹ The Labour Foreign Affairs spokesman, Gerald Kaufman, generally endorsed the government's policy in Yugoslavia, setting the

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Hogg, Yugoslavia, October 14, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.196, c.40.

¹⁰⁷ JOVIC, op.cit. p.411.

¹⁰⁸ Douglas Hogg, Yugoslavia, op.cit. c.45-6.

¹⁰⁹ Serbia had reportedly negotiated with officials in Montenegro, Greece, Russia and other countries, in order to avoid dependence on deliveries via Croatia. *RFE/RL Report*, September 27, 1991.

pattern for what was to become the standard Labour front bench position on the Balkans throughout the war.¹¹⁰

On October 18, when the Carrington Plan was presented at the Hague, Carrington invited Milosevic to speak first, contrary to the usual alphabetical procedure, evidently under the illusion that the Serbian president would accept the plan and set the tone for the Conference.¹¹¹ Milosevic's reassurance to Carrington on October 4 that he would accept the plan had almost certainly been to buy time, bearing in mind that the expiry date of the 3-month moratorium on Slovenian and Croatian independence fell on October 7.¹¹² Unsurprisingly, the Plan failed for the same reason as the proposal by the Bosnian and Macedonian presidents, Izetbegovic and Grigorov, had failed in June. Milosevic, as before, had feigned broad support for a confederal solution to avoid isolation (and to gain time), but rejected it when it came to formal endorsement. By October 30, he had persuaded Momir Bulatovic, the Montenegrin President, to withdraw his initial acceptance of the Plan.¹¹³

Milosevic also managed temporarily to subdue the growing international censure of the JNA bombardment of Dubrovnik. As UNESCO called for all arms to be withdrawn from the area, the Yugoslav attaché in London, Svetozar Rikanovic, was called to account by the Foreign Office, after which the bombing abruptly ceased.¹¹⁴ Two days later, British

¹¹⁰ An exception to this was when the late Labour leader John Smith called for military action in Bosnia in April 1993.

¹¹¹ Nikola Samardzic, testifying at the Milosevic trial, commented that Lord Carrington was concerned that Croatia would reject the plan, but was confident of Serbia's acceptance. Milosevic trial, op.cit. *ICTY*, October 8, 2002, p.11223.

¹¹² The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had already recognised Slovenian and Croatian independence. *Il Sole 24 Ore*, September 22, 1991.

¹¹³ JOVIC, op.cit. pp.399-406. Montenegro, Serbia's main ally in Yugoslavia, was essential to Serbia's claim to be the sole legitimate successor state, through the formation of a 'rump' federation.

¹¹⁴ *Borba*, October 26-27, 1991, p.2, & October 28 & 29, 1991, p.5.

Ambassador to Belgrade Peter Hall was invited, along with two other foreign diplomats, to Dubrovnik to witness the lack of damage to the city. On his return to Belgrade, the ambassador reported to the Foreign Office that he had seen only two damaged buildings and no ruins in the old town, although he admitted to witnessing evidence of destruction in the surrounding area. Dubrovnik came under renewed attack the day after he left.¹¹⁵

Slovenian and Croatian recognition was now seriously under consideration by several European states, which would render the JNA onslaught a violation of international law. Serbia also now faced an ultimatum. A meeting of EC foreign ministers on October 28 gave Serbia till November 5 to accept the EC Plan, under threat of international sanctions. It has been suggested by some analysts that the Carrington Plan did not attain the recognition it deserved, not least as testimony to the extent to which the parties were prepared to go, to meet Serb aspirations.¹¹⁶ As first presented on October 18, and in its subsequent revisions of October 23 and November 1, it may be said that, on balance, the plan represented a reasonably impartial approach towards the republics, in its accommodation of the Serb and other minorities, including provision for the restoration of autonomy in Kosovo and Vojvodina.¹¹⁷ But Kosovo was the main sticking point. Milosevic could not deny Kosovo's Albanians the rights he insisted on for Croatia's Serbs. And to agree would be to backtrack on guarantees given to Kosovo's Serbs in 1987, weakening further his position in Serbia. On November 4, however, the provisions for the former autonomous provinces were deleted from the final draft of the Plan, a distinct

¹¹⁵ *Borba*, 'Borbe se nastavljaju', November 1, 1991, p.1. On November 8, the medieval centre of Dubrovnik was heavily shelled for the first time by JNA forces. *RFE/RL*. op.cit. November 9-10, 1991.

¹¹⁶ See, for instance, SILBER/LITTLE, op.cit. p.212.

¹¹⁷ Hungarians constituted about 20 % of the population of Vojvodina, and had benefited from the autonomy conferred by the 1974 Constitution.

concession to the Serbs by Lord Carrington. This, too, was rejected by Milosevic, however, who was now in the process of producing a proposal of his own to the international community.

The Vance Plan

In the impasse arising from the Serbian rejection of Lord Carrington's plan, Milosevic and Jovic worked on a new proposal for the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops in the Serb-held enclaves of Croatia. The intention was to freeze Serb territorial gains, while releasing JNA troops for the planned Serb takeover of parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the same time, it would reinforce Milosevic in power. This proposal was assisted through the UN Security Council by Britain, France and Romania (then holding the presidency), and supported by the new UN envoy, Cyrus Vance, and by Lord Carrington at the EC Peace Conference. Soon afterwards referred to as the Vance Plan, it was mostly forgotten, or overlooked, that the proposal had originated in Belgrade. Meanwhile, at the opening of the new parliament, the Foreign Secretary sought to define British policy in the post Cold War era.

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In the run up to the Maastricht summit, Britain had once again become isolated in EC circles as its European partners came to realise that, despite a change of leader, the Thatcherite EC policies were still very much in place.¹¹⁸ Douglas Hurd, however, at the Queen's Speech on November 1, sought to place Britain in the forefront of Europe, and of international policy in Yugoslavia:

¹¹⁸ In *Le Monde*, 11 October 1991, p.2, Britain was referred to as a Trojan horse, and the EC as being at the foot of a British wall. 'La Communauté au pied du mur Britannique'.

It is increasingly clear that the United States is not willing, and the Soviet Union is not able, to act as policemen or magistrates of the world... increasingly the US will look to regional or international organisations to settle regional disputes. That has a great bearing on what is happening and what might happen in Yugoslavia. It has meant clearly and specifically that the European Community has been expected to take the lead in international efforts to help find an answer to the problems in Yugoslavia. That is right... We cannot impose peace on the peoples and republics of Yugoslavia - nobody can ...

Few...Members would argue that we should launch British soldiers into operations to which it would be hard to see a limit or an end...we would encourage hopes which we would not be willing or able to realise. It would not be sensible to go down that path...We are at the centre of events. No other country belongs to NATO, the Community, the Commonwealth, the Group of Seven and the United Nations Security Council. We are uniquely central in the developments and discussions that I have been talking about...¹¹⁹

In affirming Britain's 'uniquely' central role in the management of the Yugoslav crisis, the Foreign Secretary went on to reject the proposal for an air exclusion zone over Croatia to stop the bombing of Vukovar, Dubrovnik and other towns, commenting that it would probably not be meaningful (he did not elaborate on this) or viable.¹²⁰ He confirmed continued support for the blanket arms embargo, and for Lord Carrington's peace conference.¹²¹ He did not reprove Milosevic for reneging on his initial acceptance of the peace plan, but simply described the Serbian president as 'obdurate'. Nor he condemn the Serbian leadership for orchestrating the onslaught on Vukovar. Instead, he lay all blame on the JNA, which he alleged was 'struggling for its own existence as an army, regardless of any constituted authority'.¹²² In

¹¹⁹ Douglas Hurd. Debate on the Address, November 1, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.198, c.130. For further discussion of the Foreign Secretary's views on arriving at agreement within EC structures, see Orders of the Day, December 19, 1991. *Hansard*, Vol.201, c.482-5.

¹²⁰ The foreign secretary confirmed this position the following month. 'I do not think that an air shield is feasible or would be effective'. Douglas Hurd, Oral Answers, December 18, 1991. *Hansard*, Vol.201, c.266.

¹²¹ Five days after this speech the Hague Conference adjourned in 'an atmosphere of failure', with Carrington's scepticism described as 'contagious'. *Le Monde*, November 7, 1991, p.4.

¹²² Douglas Hurd, Debate on the Address, op.cit. c.121.

short, at a time when Serbian government policies in Croatia were coming under growing pressure both within Serbia and internationally, with the multi-ethnic city of Vukovar about to fall to the JNA and Serb paramilitaries, Milosevic had been implicitly acquitted by at least one major power.

In rejecting the concept of majority voting, Douglas Hurd also elaborated on his methods of achieving 'unanimity' within the EC by 'sitting around a table and thrashing out a problem, and then reaching agreement on what needs to be done'.¹²³ The Foreign Secretary stressed that Britain's foreign policy 'has to be strenuous and energetic' and that it would succeed.¹²⁴ On November 4, Lord Carrington presented the final draft of the EC Plan to the republics.¹²⁵ Within days of its rejection by Milosevic, on November 9, the 'rump' Yugoslav presidency's proposal for a UN force was on its way to the Security Council.

The new proposal was distinctly more advantageous for the Milosevic regime. The circumstances under which foreign troops would now enter Croatia were substantively different from three months earlier, when the French had first mooted the idea. Most of the Serb majority areas were now under Serb control, and much else besides. On the other hand, due to desertion, lack of discipline and low morale amongst recruits, the JNA could not hold out for much longer without the full mobilisation of Serbia. Additionally, Serbs were fleeing en masse in Central Slavonia before a Croatian offensive. With a stalemate developing, this was the time from the Serb viewpoint to set in motion the process for engaging

¹²³ Douglas Hurd, *Ibid.* c.124.

¹²⁴ Douglas Hurd, *Ibid.* c.130.

¹²⁵ See BURG, Steven L and SHOUP, Paul S in *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*. M.E. Sharpe, 2000, p.89, for a discussion of the provisions of the respective drafts of the EC Plan.

UN troops to protect the territory acquired by force.¹²⁶ On the other hand, it made international recognition of Croatia virtually inevitable, since without the promise of independence, Tudjman would have been unlikely to agree to deployment in the enclaves.¹²⁷ Acceptance in full of the Belgrade proposal would imply *de facto* endorsement by the UN of Croatia's loss of territorial integrity. Croatia was by now virtually severed in two, with no access to the Danube. Several hundred thousand Croatians were consigned to long-term refugee status, while the Krajina Serbs controlled nearly a third of the new state. The UN envoy, Cyrus Vance was considerably out of his depth in the Balkans, and mostly guided by the UN in New York.¹²⁸

On November 13, Britain asked the UN Security Council to discuss the despatch of UN peacekeepers to Yugoslavia.¹²⁹ On the same day, the proposal was conditionally endorsed by the British foreign minister in the House of Commons.¹³⁰ There was no international debate about the terms of UN deployment. The conditions laid down in the letter from the rump presidency in Belgrade, namely, that the troops be placed along the lines of confrontation, consolidating Serb territorial gains, rather than along the republic boundary lines, were automatically accepted. The proposal was put to the UN Security Council via the Romanian President who was considered more amenable to a Serb-inspired

¹²⁶ One Balkans military expert considered that the war in Croatia ended precisely because the momentum was moving from the JNA to the Croatian side. CIGAR, Norman. 'Croatia's War of Independence: The Parameters of War Termination', in *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol.10, No.2, June 1997, pp.34-70.

¹²⁷ On the UNPROFOR role in Croatia, the British UN Under-Secretary for Peacekeeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, notes that 'Milosevic and Kadijevic were on the whole reasonable and supportive of our proposals. Tudjman, by contrast, was strained and emotional, very much the underdog.' See GOULDING, Marrack. *Peacemonger*, John Murray, 2002, p.300.

¹²⁸ Cyrus Vance was often flanked at press conferences by Marrack Goulding, who accompanied Vance to Yugoslavia to negotiate a ceasefire the day after Vukovar fell. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed assessment of Goulding's role.

¹²⁹ *RFE/RL, Report on Eastern Europe*. November 22, 1991.

¹³⁰ Douglas Hogg, *Croatia*. November 13, 1991. *Hansard*, Vol.198, c.1208.

initiative than Yugoslavia's official UN Representative, Darko Silovic, a Croat.¹³¹ Secrecy in the early stages, according to Jovic, was such that even Jugoslav Kostic and Sejdo Bajramovic, two of the four Serb bloc Presidency members, were not brought into discussions.¹³² Deputy Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs Milovoj Maksic, when first consulted, believed that the proposal would not be accepted since the West did not recognise the four-member rump presidency. He was wrong, however. Britain and France waived the fact that the proposal was not signed by the SFRJ President, Stipe Mesic, or by the Slovenian, Bosnian and Macedonian Presidency members (none of whom were even consulted), but pressed for its prompt acceptance within the UN Security Council.¹³³ Considerable diplomatic activity ensued. Carrington flew to meet Milosevic in Belgrade, for the first time expressing optimism, and stressing that the UN deployment depended on Milosevic's agreement. He did not seem bothered that, as Yugoslav UN Ambassador Silovic was to point out, the proposal was illegal since it had not passed through the SFRY constitutional process.¹³⁴

The Belgrade regime now had a double-edged advantage. Carrington and Vance had endorsed the proposal, but stressed that a cease-fire had to

¹³¹ 'We found a 'Solomon's' solution: to send it personally to the President of the Security Council, the Romanian Ambassador to the UN, and to inform the Romanian government so that they can influence matters, to bring the request onto the agenda...' JOVIC, op.cit. p.409. [Author's translation]

¹³² JOVIC, Ibid. p.408.

¹³³ Jovic comments in his memoirs that the Security Council had begun debating the idea of sending 'blue berets' into Krajina, but that they avoided mentioning that Serbia had requested it! "They... found a 'Solomon's' solution. Great Britain and France 'sought' it formally...they didn't want to mention our 'rump' Presidency'. JOVIC, Ibid. p.411. On 17 October, the rump Presidency had already informed the EC that it had competency in respect to Yugoslavia's defence, security and foreign affairs. At the same time, it ordered the red star to be removed from JNA berets, and banned all communist and 'Titoist' insignia. *Le Monde*, October 18, 1991, p.3.

¹³⁴ *Borba*, November 11, 1991, p.14. See also *Le Monde*, November 12, 1991, p.7, for Croatia's reaction, and *Le Monde*, November 10, 1991, p.3, for Croatia's and Slovenia's upbraiding of the international community for its 'evenhanded' attitude.

be in place before a peacekeeping force could be sent,¹³⁵ a signal that peace enforcement was not on the agenda. But, if no UN force was to be despatched while fighting continued, there was little inducement to halt the offensive. Since all Serb-held territory was to be under UN military protection there was, on the contrary, an incentive to conquer as much as possible. Accordingly, the JNA onslaught on Vukovar intensified with no international response beyond a further abortive EC-brokered ceasefire.¹³⁶ On November 18, Vukovar fell to the JNA and Serb paramilitaries, and the EC and the International Red Cross agreed to oversee the evacuation of some 14,000 civilians and wounded.¹³⁷

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Serbia's proposal to the Security Council was raised in an Adjournment Debate in the House of Commons on 13 November. Called at the request of Conservative backbencher, Peter Fry, the debate started at 11.45pm. It was Labour MP Robert Wareing, a frequent visitor to Yugoslavia with pro-Serb sympathies, who raised the issue of deploying "a peacekeeping force within the Serbian enclaves in Croatia and along the Croatian border with Serbia."¹³⁸ The Foreign Minister clarified the British position.

The proposition...is not unattractive. I understand the intellectual force of it...that we should protect the enclaves by some form of

¹³⁵ RFE/RL, op.cit.

¹³⁶ RFE/RL, Ibid. November 29, 1991.

¹³⁷ Goulding notes in his memoir that Van den Broek was keeping Carrington 'on a tight rein and was insisting that any agreement should include condemnation of the JNA attack on Osijek'. GOULDING, op.cit. p.40. Osijek at this time was, as Goulding confirmed, under JNA siege, and undergoing heavy shelling so, in view of the Vukovar experience, Goulding's reasoning was difficult to understand. See BLASKOVICH, Jerry. *Anatomy of Deceit*. Dunhill, 1997, for an American physician's first-hand account of atrocities in Eastern Slavonia in late 1991.

¹³⁸ Robert Wareing, *Croatia*, *Hansard*, op.cit. This was the first of numerous interventions by Robert Wareing to the House, where he argued the Serb cause, often inaccurately and without evidence for his claims. See HODGE, Carole. *The Serb Lobby*, op.cit. pp.13-14.

peacekeeping force...although both President Tudjman and President Milosevic have invited the Security Council and, indeed, the international community to deploy a peacekeeping force, it is clear from the small print that there are substantial differences between the two positions. The Serbs say that such a force should be along existing fighting lines, whereas the Croats say that it should be along historic frontiers. Those views are incompatible...There may come a time when we would be willing to deploy a peacekeeping force...First, there must be an effective ceasefire. Secondly, those who request it must genuinely be prepared to accept it on their territory. Thirdly, the deployment of the force must be seen to be positively productive in terms of contributing to a settlement...It may be that... the hon. Gentleman's proposal that there shall be some deployment into the enclaves becomes an option that we shall seriously consider..."¹³⁹

Croatia's preference, that troops be deployed along the republic borders, was not explored by the Foreign Minister. His statement clarified the British position, which concurred with that of the Milosevic regime.

The Croatian president reluctantly went along with the proposal because it also tacitly encompassed the prospect of Croatian recognition.¹⁴⁰

Milosevic had realised that he would have to concede Croatian independence, and had indicated such to a party of visiting British parliamentarians at the beginning of November.¹⁴¹ Germany was alone in arguing for Croatian recognition at this juncture, but other countries

¹³⁹ Douglas Hogg, *Croatia*. *Hansard*, op.cit. Milosevic had already stated clearly to British MPs on a parliamentary visit to Belgrade on 11 November that he hoped for the UN to be in "these enclaves... for a period of X years". The Foreign Affairs Committee, November 27, 1991, 125. See also *Croatia*, David Howell, March 5, 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.205, c.463. The extended UN occupation in Cyprus was probably enough to convince the Serbian leader that the conquered territory stood a chance of remaining frozen in UN hands long enough to bring about an eventual *fait accompli*.

¹⁴⁰ For the Croatian decision at this time, see CIGAR, Norman. 'Croatia's War of Independence: The Parameters of War Termination'. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol.10, No.2, June 1997. pp.43-6.

¹⁴¹ Milosevic had earlier also indicated to British MPs travelling to Yugoslavia on a fact-finding mission on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee, that Croatia's independence was acceptable to him, 'as long as within the state of Croatia there was a UN presence in these enclaves to defend for a period of X years and to safeguard the interests of the Serbian population'. See *Foreign Affairs Committee*. Examination of Witnesses. November 27, 1991, 125. Comment by Ted Rowlands, who had met Milosevic on November 11.

had intimated that they would readily follow once conditions were in place.¹⁴² In view of world-wide sympathy for the plight of Croatian civilians at this time, due to extensive media coverage of Dubrovnik and the destruction of Vukovar, and the fact that Tudjman had agreed to accord Croatia's Serbs full minority rights,¹⁴³ Croatia's request stood a strong chance of being granted. Milosevic was a pragmatist, moreover. International recognition of Croatia, provided this did not embrace any guarantee of territorial integrity, would not damage Serbia's interests in practical terms. With Southern Dalmatia and Eastern Slavonia severed from the capital, a major railway junction (Knin) under Serb control, and its tourist industry devastated, Croatia was unlikely to derive much tangible benefit from international recognition, at least in the short term. Meanwhile, Serbia would be free to focus on the more difficult task of taking over much of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The debate on November 13 served to further endorse the Foreign Secretary's speech of November 1. Questioned on the use of air power or a naval force to lift the siege of Dubrovnik, Foreign Minister Hogg opined

I do not believe that we can [deploy an interdiction naval force] because there is no authority to do so. Let us be clear about this: if we were to deploy naval units, they could be effective only if they were authorised to fire. That is an act of war. We cannot commit an act of war unless it is lawful. I do not believe that it would be lawful unless it were underpinned by some appropriate resolution of the Security Council for the United Nations. It is unlikely that we would get such authority at the moment...The same applies to air interdiction. That will not be successful unless it is backed by the readiness to fire. That, too, is an act of war. That being so, in the absence of the Security Council resolution it would not be justified or, indeed, possible. Therefore for the moment I could not commend either proposition to the House...In

¹⁴² On October 31, the Italian foreign minister, Gianni De Michelis, stated that the EC would recognise the independence of all the republics that requested it. Sir Russell Johnston Debate on the Address, op.cit. c.146. Slovenian and Croatian passports were already being recognised by Austria, Italy and Germany. *Le Monde*, October 12, 1991, p.3.

¹⁴³ The Croatian government passed a law which went some way to guaranteeing rights to minorities on December 4, 1991, although it still fell short of the Badinter Commission requirements. *Le Monde*, December 6, 1991, p.6.

any event, I would be cautious, because once taking the path of force it is difficult to stop going the whole way. It is difficult to draw any intellectual distinction between, on the one hand, the deployment of naval and air forces and, on the other, the deployment of land forces. If we do the one, we are driven to the other. I must be honest about this. I fear greatly the prospect of committing land forces to that part of the world. I shrink from it...¹⁴⁴

On the military option in general, Mr Hogg commented

I do not believe that at present the Security Council would authorise the use of force. There is no prospect of its doing so in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we are focusing on what is obtainable within the Security Council, most notably the UN underpinning of sanctions and of the oil embargo. We may be able to achieve that. We shall have to see. But I do not believe that the authority would extend to military action of the kind suggested...¹⁴⁵

The foreign minister did not indicate where Security Council opposition to military intervention might have arisen. According to Borisav Jovic, the Russians at that time were not prepared to veto the use of force.¹⁴⁶ China, judging from its previous record, was likely to abstain, and the United States deferred to Europe on the Balkans. Of the remaining permanent members on the Security Council, Britain and France, France had already requested a UN force in the September. As Douglas Hurd had pointed out earlier, however, Britain was 'at the centre of events'.¹⁴⁷ It may, therefore, be concluded that the foreign minister's certainty about Security Council opposition to military force rested in his confidence that the British position would prevail.

¹⁴⁴ Douglas Hogg, *Croatia*, op.cit., c.1207. Former UK Ambassador to the United Nations Anthony Parsons viewed the situation differently. 'I wondered at the time whether the whole imbroglio could be ended if the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean spent half an hour, all that would have been required, destroying the puny Yugoslav navy bombarding Dubrovnik, and if NATO knocked out with air attacks the Serbian artillery which was smashing up Vukovar'. PARSONS, op.cit. p.226.

¹⁴⁵ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c.1208.

¹⁴⁶ JOVIC, op.cit. p.401.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas Hurd, *Debate on the Address*, op.cit. c.130.

On the issue of sanctions, the foreign secretary was more specific about Britain's position, and that of other Security Council members. Responding to a question on whether agreement would be sought "for a Security Council resolution imposing comprehensive sanctions, including an international oil ban, on the whole area, as a way of exerting pressure to bring the fighting to an end", Douglas Hurd stated

The three EC members of the Security Council - Britain, France and Belgium - have reached agreement on what we want the Security Council to do. Our representatives are now canvassing support for that. I am not sure whether we shall get the support, but the plan includes the elements mentioned...¹⁴⁸

These two significantly contrasting positions of the British government relating to Security Council authority are just one incident which challenges the argument that the international diplomatic failure in the Balkans was due to a lack of political will.¹⁴⁹ On its part, Britain manifested the clear will to work actively for a peacekeeping force on the lines proposed by Milosevic, but not for the interdiction force proposed earlier by other EC states and rejected by the Serbian president.

The situation in Croatia was debated in the Commons during December but, despite the centrality of the issue to UK foreign policy, parliamentary debating time was confined to the margins of other government business. In a Christmas adjournment debate on December 12, Liberal Democrat David Alton pointed to the lack of parliamentary debate and, at the same time, the degree of support amongst MPs for a review of government policy on Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁰ A further adjournment

¹⁴⁸ Oral Answers, November 20, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.199, c.255

¹⁴⁹ James Gow has adopted this viewpoint in *Triumph of the lack of will*, op.cit.

¹⁵⁰ 'There has been no debate in the House on the war in Croatia, but hon. Members have tabled early-day motions with which I have been associated. An all-party Friends of Croatia group has been established. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) tabled early-day motion 138. My hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R Johnston) tabled early-day motion 219. About 70 signatures have been added to those motions. The hon.

debate on the same day, called by Conservative MP Patrick Cormack began at 3.21 a.m. and, not surprisingly, was poorly attended. Cormack, a lone Conservative voice at this time, appealed to the government to 'stop acting as an honest broker between victim and aggressor. The evidence of responsibility for the carnage and destruction is too overwhelming to be ignored'.¹⁵¹

The Labour spokesperson for Europe, George Robertson, endorsed all the main facets of government policy. On the blanket arms embargo, he declared 'nobody who is sensible or sane would say that we should export more arms to a country that is already awash with them'.¹⁵² On Croatian and Slovenian independence, he opined 'the problem cannot be solved by the recognition of any number of states' and on military intervention declared 'there are those who even dare to say that we should intervene militarily and hope that some form of peace will come about as a result'. Robertson also referred to 'the culpability of the federal army, which is no longer responsive to any of the organs of the previous state'. He was evidently unaware that the JNA generals reported on an almost daily basis to Milosevic and the Serb-dominated rump presidency. 'We are watching human beings killing each other for no other reason than the fact that they live next door to each other'. Robertson's evident confusion about the political situation was matched by his ignorance of the regional geography, as he reflected on 'Dubrovnik....that beautiful city in the Aegean'.¹⁵³

Members for Hyndburn (Mr Hargreaves), Ynys Mon (Mr Jones) Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P Duffy) and Torfaen (Mr Murphy) are among the sponsors of those motions, that demonstrates the breadth of concern in the House...' David Alton, Adjournment (Christmas), December 12, 1991. *Hansard*. Vol.200, c.1017.

¹⁵¹ Patrick Cormack, Croatia, December 12, 1991, *Hansard*. Vol.200, c.1160.

¹⁵² George Robertson, *Ibid.* c.1164.

¹⁵³ George Robertson, *Ibid.* c.1163.

The confusion evident amongst a number of Members less directly concerned with foreign policy is perhaps not surprising. Many of the experts, including British academics, were also confused. One Balkans military specialist stated that 'the army has its own agenda which is not the same as the Serbian regime in Belgrade nowadays', a comment repeated by Foreign Office officials and others which suggested that the JNA offensive outside Milosevic's control.¹⁵⁴ Other expert witnesses, giving evidence at the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, contributed to the myth that the army was out of political control, one opining that it would be 'extremely difficult to identify useful interlocutors and workable structures through which to work'.¹⁵⁵ The interlocutors existed: Federal President Stipe Mesic, Prime Minister Ante Markovic, Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar, and others.¹⁵⁶ But they had been forsaken in the frantic international scramble to reach an accommodation with Milosevic! One witness concluded that 'only mutual exhaustion - not reason or foreign intervention - seems likely to stop [the war]¹⁵⁷ a view supported by another witness who opined that 'military intervention is not a realistic option', instead advocating 'unobstructive' mediation, and also informed the Committee that whilst Croatia was "defending a cause", the other side had no war aims!¹⁵⁸ He

¹⁵⁴ See evidence submitted by expert witnesses to the Foreign Affairs Committee on November 27, 1991. Nos. 147, 149 & 153, and December 4, 1991, No. 234, where Jonathan Eyal, Director of the Royal United Services Institute, and a frequent contributor to the Balkans debate in the British media, described the Yugoslav army as 'an independent institution'.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Wheeler, from the School of Slavonic Studies, London University, referred to 'tribalism', and a 'madness' and psychosis' amongst Serbs and Croats. Report to Foreign Affairs Committee, November 27, 1991, pp.76-79.

¹⁵⁶ The Federal Assembly passed a vote of no confidence in Ante Markovic and Budimir Loncar on November 15, but Markovic refused to resign, calling the vote 'an illegal and illegitimate act'. But he did resign a month later because, according to Yugoslav reports, 81% of the 1992 budget had been earmarked for the federal armed forces which, Markovic believed, would lead to a continuation of war. *RFE/RL*, January 10, 1992.

¹⁵⁷ Mark Wheeler. "The Death of Yugoslavia [CE 72]". Report to Foreign Affairs Committee. November 27, 1991, p.79.

¹⁵⁸ Dr Stevan Pavlovitch, University of Southampton. Evidence before Foreign Affairs Committee, November 27, 1991, No.108. See also Recent developments in Eastern Europe with special reference to Yugoslavia, a memorandum submitted by the Foreign & Commonwealth

referred to the situation in Dubrovnik as "stabilized", moreover, at a time when it was being bombarded by land, sea and air. On the question of the role of the JNA, on which witnesses were closely questioned, two of them apparently were of the belief that the JNA was engaged in an ideological war against fascism.¹⁵⁹ The day before the Foreign Affairs Committee meeting, a confidential EC Monitor's report was leaked to the media. The report also constituted an appeal to European leaders. It stated that

the path of negotiation and persuasion chosen by Europe has failed and its pursuance will damage Europe's image and credibility. The Mission has exhausted all means of action. The moment has come for ministers to make a choice: either to pursue (the same path), but with certain failure; or to leave, which would be dishonourable; or to give the Mission the military means of protection and persuasion to give the process a chance of succeeding.¹⁶⁰

The international response to the deepening crisis was a UN peacekeeping force which British officials insisted should not enter Croatia before a lasting ceasefire was in place. This was reinforced in the House of Commons by Douglas Hurd, in response to the argument from a Conservative backbencher that either Croatia should have the means of self-defence, or it should be defended by UN troops with a peace enforcement role, as opposed to merely a peacekeeping one.

Office (CE 17), dated 11 October 1991, published by The Foreign Affairs Committee, 6 November 1991, p.15 [12], which concluded that the 'origins of the crisis lie in the division between Rome and Byzantium'. The memorandum also defined the limits of NATO intervention to exclude Yugoslavia [24], minimized the differences between Britain and other EC member states on a potential WEU contribution [26], and advised that as Yugoslavia is '*sui generis*... there is no necessary reason why the crisis in Yugoslavia should generate widespread regional instability'. [29]

¹⁵⁹ Dr. Pavlovitch and Dr Wheeler, *Ibid.* Nos.147 & 149. For further comment on the British intellectual and media response to the war, see SIMMS, *op.cit.* pp.306-313.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted by Chenu J. in COT, *ed. op.cit.* p.101. Anthony Parsons agreed. 'I do not believe in the effectiveness of unarmed observers, or lightly armed peacekeepers in such roles [a state verging on civil war or disintegration]...three or four battalion groups with supporting weapons, if deployed...on the Croatian side of the Serbia/Croatia border in 1991, might well have prevented hostilities from breaking out'. PARSONS, *op.cit.* p.256 & 262. See also *Le Monde*, December 4, 1991, p.4.

Mr Hurd replied:

I do not think that there has ever been any prospect of any member of the European Community or of the United Nations believing that a United Nations or a Western European Union peace-keeping force could force its way into Yugoslavia against the opposition either or the Yugoslav national army - the JNA - or of any armed force.¹⁶¹

It was an argument, and a mode of argument, that Douglas Hurd was to adopt on many occasions in the House of Commons, the media and elsewhere. But it did not quite correspond with the facts. Following the fall of Vukovar, for instance, the French foreign minister, Roland Dumas, had proposed that the UN enter Croatia regardless of any ceasefire,¹⁶² the essential difference being that the French government at that point was still prepared to defy Milosevic and the JNA, while the British were not.

Conclusion

The response by the European Community to the war in Croatia in 1991 laid down the parameters for international Balkans policy over the following four years, facilitating the takeover by the JNA and Serb paramilitaries of one third of Croatia, while freeing the JNA to launch an offensive in Bosnia and Herzegovina the following year.

The inefficacy of EC involvement in the early stages of the war can partly be attributed to its lack of understanding of recent developments in Yugoslavia, and the degree to which the country had already disintegrated, in terms of the Titoist structures set up in the wake of World War II. By early 1991, Yugoslavia had all but collapsed in constitutional, political and economic terms, due mainly to measures

¹⁶¹ Douglas Hurd, Oral Answers, December 18, 1991, op.cit. c.266.

¹⁶² *Le Monde*, November 20, 1991, p.5.

taken by the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, to gain control over much of the Yugoslav Federation, while the legitimate concerns of Croatian Serbs for the preservation of their rights within an independent Croatia were fuelled out of all proportion by propaganda from Serbia. Milosevic, well before the onset of hostilities in June 1991, infiltrated insurgents into Serb majority towns and villages in Croatia, and those with a large Serb minority, initiating low-key disturbances and military manoeuvres, laying the ground for support in the planned offensive.

On the other hand, the attempts by Slovenia and Croatia to secede from the Federation were not altogether dissimilar to national(ist) manifestations throughout eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but were probably in greater measure a reaction to the 'Greater Serbia' policy orchestrated from Belgrade. The failure of efforts by the Macedonian and Bosnian leaders in the first half of 1991 to secure a confederal arrangement acceptable to all sides reflected the impasse which only external (political) intervention might have alleviated.

Initially, whilst hostilities were confined to Slovenia, the European Community took the international initiative, giving priority to political means for resolving the conflict. Once the war spread to Croatia, and alternative measures were considered at various international fora, Britain emerged as the European power most opposed to an international military presence in Croatia, either in the form of European monitors or an interpositionary force. In this, it was supported by the Soviet Union.

Following the Soviet coup on August 20, and Russia's subsequent temporary retreat from the Balkan policy arena, the EC was afforded more leeway in which to produce a policy more responsive to the escalating situation on the ground. Calls for military intervention in late August, less muted than the French-inspired attempt a month earlier to despatch a WEU force to Croatia, were met with the British proposal for

a peace conference in the Hague, to be chaired by a former NATO secretary-general and British foreign secretary, Lord Carrington.

The Hague Conference was founded on the premise that the only approach to what Britain characterised as an intractable conflict was through a negotiated solution, acceptable to all sides. This 'evenhanded' approach to what most independent observers regarded as a war of aggression was bolstered by an arms embargo on all Yugoslav republics, proposed by Britain and others at the UN Security Council, directly benefiting the Belgrade regime which by now controlled the Yugoslav Army and arms production facilities. It also offered a façade of activity, whilst forestalling other, potentially more effective, policies.

During the same month, a 'consensus' of EC foreign ministers, led by British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd, publicly declared that international military intervention was not contemplated in Croatia. The decision was carried against the judgment of most other major EC states, and a number of other countries outside the EC, and a Council of Europe recommendation. France and Germany demonstrated their continuing concern at the inadequacy of the EC response by seeking UN support for a military interpositional force.

The relative ease with which Britain was able to guide the consensus within the EC is partly attributable to EC structures which required unanimity in the sphere of foreign and defence policy; it was also due to the Netherland Presidency's concern to maintain EC cohesion in the lead-up to Maastricht and, not least, to the reluctance of European states to take responsibility for military action in which neither Britain - arguably the strongest EC military power - nor the United States were prepared to participate.

French opposition to Britain's non-interventionist policy was of continuing concern to the Foreign Office, however, since despite the

UK's membership of all major global institutions, and its track record in international diplomacy, French support was considered essential for what amounted to appeasement of Serbia. Fitzroy Maclean's visit to Belgrade had the dual purpose of bringing Serbia on board in support of the peace process, and encouraging Milosevic to approach French President Mitterand, known for his Serb sympathies, to do the same.

Milosevic initially supported the EC proposals, only to reject them two weeks later, when they were formally presented to the republics. This was an unexpected obstacle for Lord Carrington and his associates who, over the weeks that followed, were prepared to accommodate the Serbian leader to the point of eliminating from the revised plan any reciprocal provisions for Albanians and other non-Serb minorities. Yet the gesture misfired. The Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina had already been unilaterally established by December 1990, coinciding with the election of Milosevic as president of Serbia. The EC Conference plea, therefore, for Serb *minority* rights to be respected in Croatia was, so far as the Krajina Serbs were concerned, quite misplaced, as they had never considered themselves a minority, but as having equality with other Croatian nationals, and would not have been assuaged by any Yugoslavia other than within a Serb-dominated framework.

The collapse of the Hague Conference posed a dilemma for Lord Carrington. Since Serbia alone had blocked the EC proposal for a loose confederation, and since Croatia had declared itself prepared to amend its constitution to protect Serb minority rights more fully, many EC leaders felt that recognition of the republics which wished it could not reasonably be withheld for much longer. It was also clear that Germany, Italy, Belgium and Denmark, as well as several countries outside the EC, intended to recognise Slovenia and Croatia in any case.

By early November, it was finally clear to the international community that Yugoslavia could be held together in a form acceptable to the

Belgrade regime only as a unitary state in which Serbia, by definition the largest, most populous republic, and in control of the Federation's financial, military and foreign affairs, would dominate. This solution had now been rejected not only by Slovenia and Croatia, but by Bosnia and Macedonia as well. In consequence, two policies were gradually set in motion as an interim solution to the conflict, the so-called Vance Plan, on the one hand and, on the other, the process of offering international recognition to Slovenia, Croatia and other Yugoslav republics who fulfilled the criteria laid down by the Badinter Arbitration Commission.

What later became known as the Vance Plan was in fact initiated in Belgrade, and involved the deployment of UN troops along the confrontation lines in Croatia, once a ceasefire had been secured. Whilst Croatia had long sought UN peacekeepers, albeit along the republic borders, Serbia's endorsement, indeed its promotion, of the Plan was proposed at the Security Council by Britain and France, and followed up with alacrity by Lord Carrington, together with UN envoy Cyrus Vance and UN Under-Secretary for peacekeeping operations, Marrack Goulding. Yet no other single international policy contributed so directly to the escalation of the war to Bosnia-Herzegovina as the Vance Plan. For, in releasing the JNA from its Croatian offensive (indeed, insisting on its withdrawal) and at the same time freezing Serb territorial gains, the occupying UN peacekeeping force unwittingly provided the conditions for the JNA offensive to shift to Bosnia since, crucially, the JNA was able to carry out an offensive on one main front at a time only, mainly due to shortage of manpower. Moreover, as much of the JNA offensive had been conducted from Bosnia-Herzegovina, withdrawal was a relatively simple task. The JNA was well supported by the Serb police and civilian population who had been groomed over a number of months for the moment of takeover in their respective regions.

The German-propelled policy to recognise the independence of Croatia and Slovenia cannot be considered in isolation from the Vance Plan and its consequences. The allegation of 'premature' recognition (which originated in Belgrade) has frequently been cited as the main cause of the break-up of Yugoslavia, the collapse of EC policy, and the extension of the war to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet those allegations generally failed to take full account of the situation in Bosnia at that time. Along with the massive arms build-up orchestrated from Belgrade amongst Serb communities throughout Bosnia and Eastern Herzegovina during 1991, with the establishment of Serb autonomous areas, there was a gradual takeover of the media which was being used as a propaganda tool to engender fear amongst Serb communities outside Serbia.

A quid-pro-quo deal may have been struck between Britain and Germany in exchange for German concessions on Maastricht, but the inevitability of eventually conceding recognition to all republics who qualified was clear. Equally, the sobering effect on Serbia of the international recognition of Slovenia, and especially Croatia, was short-lived. Once it became clear that the Serbs could, with impunity, transfer their offensive to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the technicality of Croatian recognition, without any concomitant international military support to secure its borders, was seen by the Milosevic regime in particular as no more than a temporary hiccup. Having successfully galvanised his people into action through a combination of myth-making and propaganda, backed by the expropriation of the arsenal of the Yugoslav army, Milosevic saw the opportunity to gain control of large swathes of territory outside Serbia and, at the same time, offset the deepening economic crisis by a war of 'national liberation'. But none of these ambitious plans would have been realisable without the benefit of international policies which worked in Serbia's favour. In most of these, Britain took a leading role.

The British government also contributed to refining a number of myths issuing from Belgrade which lent legitimacy to the regime, and helped consolidate Milosevic in power. The myth that the war arose out of centuries of ethnic hatred, that it was 'tribal', or a 'madness', was incorporated into Foreign Office reports and academic analysis, suggesting that there was little outsiders could do, other than mediate evenhandedly. One of the most farfetched myths, that the breakup of Yugoslavia was the result of a German (and/or Vatican) plot, still prevails in some quarters. However, Croatia's 'premature' recognition continues to be proffered as the single most damaging policy into which Germany allegedly railroaded its EC partners. A number of European states had concluded, however, that recognition of the western republics, and others that fulfilled the criteria of the Badinter Commission, was inevitable after the collapse of the Hague Conference, and in the continued eschewal of military intervention. Without the 'carrot' of Croatian recognition, it is most unlikely that Croatia would have acquiesced in the Vance Plan, as conceived by Milosevic, to deploy UN troops within the Serb enclaves, especially as the Croatian Army strengthened. The main difference between the Tudjman and Milosevic perspectives at this time was that Milosevic viewed Croatian independence as a temporary setback, and the UN occupation as indefinite, whereas Tudjman saw it the other way round.

Another myth was the alleged centrality of Croatia's invidious role in the Second World War which was magnified, especially in the Serb media, to justify a Serb onslaught on Croatian civilians half a century later, instilling disproportionate fear in Croatia's Serb population well before hostilities erupted. Elements of this propaganda found their way into British political and media circles, often stifling serious debate on contemporary developments on the ground, to the point where the flattening of Vukovar, despite vivid news coverage, was scarcely discussed, either at parliamentary or academic level. After Vukovar, a line was drawn in the sand. World leaders, with Lord Carrington, Cyrus

Vance and Murrain Goulding in the lead, responded to the graphic evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity by concluding another abortive ceasefire with the Serbian leader who had orchestrated the Vukovar tragedy.

The war in Croatia was fought out in the margins of the Maastricht Treaty, and at the end of the Cold War. Britain's Balkans policy was dictated in great part by its perception of its position in Europe, especially after the reunification of Germany, and its wider role in the emerging post cold war configuration. Britain was also concerned to retain its position as a Permanent Member of the Security Council, and a leading world power which at times meant 'punching above its weight'.

The unity and stability of Yugoslavia was considered essential by all leading Western powers in the environment of a disintegrating Soviet Empire but, as this became increasingly impossible to maintain, European powers had different and often conflicting views on how to address the crisis. The breakup of Yugoslavia presented an opportunity for Britain to recuperate some of its lost initiative within the EC, through asserting its will where it was strongest, through diplomacy, and with the authority of its military standing and expertise. But while France sought through the WEU to promote a European army, Britain opposed any plan which moved that objective forward, other than in purely rhetorical terms. Britain was also aware that any agreement on the use of force could involve UK troops in a leading role. The Northern Ireland experience was often quoted as pivotal to Britain's caution.

There were other reasons for British opposition to peacekeeping troops in the Summer and early Autumn of 1991, however. Yugoslavia, with one of the largest armies in Europe, and in a crucial geostrategic position, had been viewed as a reliable ally in the Second World War, while British/Serbian co-operation dated from World War 1 and earlier. Initially, Britain supported Yugoslavia's unity, the Carrington Plan

representing the lowest common denominator position acceptable to all sides on the ground. Once this option had to be abandoned due to Serbia's wholesale rejection of the Plan, Britain supported Serbia, the largest and most powerful Yugoslav republic, as the natural successor to Yugoslavia. To some extent British policy, adapting with changing circumstances but always with these aims in mind, coincided with that of Slobodan Milosevic who, unlike the JNA generals, had discarded Yugoslav unity once it became an encumbrance. This is not to say that British policy was monolithic, nor necessarily always explicitly articulated. Indeed, Douglas Hurd often sought to assure his critics that the policy could change. The Belgrade regime realised early on, however, that whatever changes took place at Britain's instigation were likely to favour Serbia so long as its policy remained within certain understood boundaries. When Milosevic rejected the Carrington Plan, against Fitzroy MacLean's advice, the Serbian leader knew the ball was in his court, and the acceptance, and indeed promotion, of the policy of despatching UN troops to Croatia *within Serb-held areas* was the most convenient way of staving off an oil embargo and possibly military intervention, bearing in mind that Britain was in a minority position in the EC in opposing this. It was also, of course, a bonus as it froze, and virtually legitimised Serb territorial gains, releasing the JNA for battle on a new front, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

CHAPTER 2

BOSNIA 1992: CONSOLIDATING POLICY

Introduction

The consolidation of British policy in former Yugoslavia progressed apace, as the main focus of war moved from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Part 1 of this chapter assesses Britain's role in what was termed a 'twin-track' international policy, namely, the deployment of UN troops in Croatia, and the EC plan for the ethnic cantonisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It also examines the introduction and enforcement of UN sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro and their significance, both regionally and in the context of international policy. Part 2 examines the British EC Presidency [July-December 1992], including the London Conference, UN troop deployment in Bosnia, the debate on the air exclusion zone, the refugee issue, and the process of establishing a war crimes commission. Sources include parliamentary proceedings, governmental and non-governmental reports, academic and other relevant publications, local and international media reports, and meetings with key officials.

It concludes that, despite an attempt by France to assume the leading role, Britain managed to retain the international initiative so that, by the end of the year, pressure from other international players and the general public for firmer military action in Bosnia and/or an end to the blanket arms embargo had been quashed in favour of a negotiated settlement. This, in view of the marked discrepancy in weaponry, and the fact that VRS forces by mid 1992 controlled over 70% of Bosnian territory, amounted to a tacit acceptance of 'ethnic cleansing', and left the Bosnian government with the choice between the pursuance of a war

of attrition and acceptance of an ethnically-partitioned Serb-ruled state, the latter meeting the main objectives of the Pale and Belgrade regimes.

PART I

At the beginning of the New Year, the Foreign Secretary reiterated Britain's objectives in the post Cold War era.

In recent years, Britain has punched above her weight in the world. We intend to keep it that way...Britain plays a central role in world affairs. We owe this in part to our history, but we continue to earn it through active diplomacy and a willingness to shoulder our share of international responsibilities.¹

The withdrawal of JNA forces from Croatia, and international recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence in January 1992, marked a brief interval of relative peace, while the EC and UN developed a twin-track policy to address the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation, involving the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops in Croatia, on the one hand and, on the other, a plan for the ethnic cantonisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, under the auspices of the EC. While the international character of the twin-track policy was institutionally underpinned, however, both 'tracks' were initiated in Belgrade and, thereafter substantially steered by British politicians and diplomats. The convergent positions of London and Belgrade are illustrated in statements by senior politicians in the respective capitals.

The United Kingdom Government, the European Community and the United Nations have a twin-track policy, the first element of which is to encourage the parties to participate in the negotiations under the chairmanship of...Lord Carrington. The second track is that we strongly support the deployment of a peace keeping force [in Croatia]²

¹ Douglas Hurd, 'Making the world a safer place: our priorities', *Daily Telegraph*, January 1, 1992.

² Douglas Hogg, *Yugoslavia*, March 5, 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.205, c.487.

It is quite rightly considered in the world today that the UN peacekeeping operation and the Brussels Conference on Yugoslavia are two complementary pillars supporting the entire unraveling of the Yugoslav crisis.³

Two British diplomats, Marrack Goulding, the UN Under-Secretary General for political affairs, and Cedric Thornberry, the UN head of civil affairs in former Yugoslavia,⁴ oversaw the terms of UN deployment in the area. Lord Carrington, meanwhile, revived the moribund EC Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, and led negotiations for the future of the Serb-occupied areas of Croatia and, later, the so-called Cutileiro Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵

The UN arms embargo, imposed on Yugoslavia in September 1991, was transferred to its successor states which, many experts contend, contravened Article 51 of the UN Charter which grants member states the right to self-defence.⁶ Since Yugoslavia's defence equipment industry had sufficient raw materials for three to five years' production, this arrangement considerably advantaged the well-armed Serbs over their Croatian and Bosnian Muslim counterparts.⁷ The day preceding

³ Borisav Jovic, Assembly of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, March 19, 1992. *Review of International Affairs*, No.1003, April 1, 1992, p.11.

⁴ Cedric Thornberry was considered by UN Commander in Bosnia, Lewis MacKenzie, to rank third behind UN Commander Satish Nambiar and Morillon in the overall mission. See MACKENZIE, Lewis. *Peacekeeper: the road to Sarajevo*, Douglas & McIntyre, 1993, p.122.

⁵ Interview with Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, Bosnian government representative in the EC negotiations, Feb/March 1992, and Deputy Bosnian President (1992-4).

⁶ See, for instance, CIGAR, Norman. 'The Right to Defence: Thoughts on the Bosnian Arms Embargo'. *Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies*, Occasional Paper 63, 1995, and KIRKPATRICK, Jeane, former US representative to the UN, and ABRAMOWITZ, Morton, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in *New York Times*, Op-Ed, April 20, 1994. For an opposing view, see GOW, James. *The Serbian Project and its Adversaries*, Hurst, 2003, p.97.

⁷ BEAVER, Paul. Yugo-Arms: Enough to Export. The Yugofax Dossier, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)*, 1992, p.45-6. See also *Borba*, January 17, 1992, p.9. 'Mala prakticna korist' (Little practical use). British officials let it be known that Croatia should not expect to use

Croatian and Slovenian recognition, the Foreign Secretary informed the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that, with the UN arms embargo still in place, international recognition would be of little practical benefit to the newly independent states.⁸

In January 1992, following Murrack Goulding's recommendation to the UN Secretary-General, the UN decided that the local administration and policing in the Serb-held areas of Croatia was to remain effectively in the hands of the Serb authorities for not less than a year. It also rejected the Bosnian president's request to deploy UN troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina as a preventive measure, before the onset of hostilities. Goulding again visited the area at the behest of the UN Secretary General in early May once hostilities were well under way, and once more advised against the deployment of a UN force in Bosnia.⁹ A seasoned UN diplomat, Murrack Goulding had accompanied UN envoy Cyrus Vance on a number of trips to Yugoslavia in late 1991, when agreement was reached that UNPROFOR should be concentrated in areas where the Serbs formed a majority or a substantial minority, effectively perpetuating ethnic partition. Although this coincided with Milosevic's interests,¹⁰ it conflicted with those of the Croatian government. It also went against the advice of the EC President and others who had warned against

recognition as a licence to arm. Milosevic had also calculated that independence for the republics meant little in security terms. SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* p.241.

⁸ "It has become clear really in the last few weeks recognition is not a major matter... We have checked with the United Nations' legal services and it is clear recognition does not affect the arms embargo; the UN arms embargo, which is mandatory continues to apply to all the Republics of the former Yugoslavia... The practical effects of recognition as opposed to the psychological are secondary." Douglas Hurd, Minutes of Evidence taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee, January 14, 1992, para.399. According to former UK ambassador to the UN, Anthony Parsons, "Resolution 713 would not have been put to the vote. But the damage had been done. The precedent, established with the lifting of Rhodesian sanctions in 1979, that only the Council can cancel what it has imposed, has precluded the possibility of lifting the arms embargo from the Bosnians only". PARSONS, *op.cit.* p.224.

⁹ WOODWARD, *op.cit.* p.285 & 287.

¹⁰ Borisav Jovic records the extreme satisfaction of the Serbian leadership with Vance's efforts. JOVIC, *op.cit.* p.430, January 27, 1992. Owen also records Vance's close relationship with Milosevic. OWEN, *op.cit.* p.51.

creating a Cyprus-type situation where the UN effectively froze territorial gains.¹¹

The flexibility demonstrated by the UN in accommodating the interests of the Belgrade regime (although not the Krajina leadership),¹² would not have been lost on Bosnian Serb leaders, as tensions between the communities in Bosnia mounted.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Prelude to war

It is often argued that EC recognition of the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the main factor prompting the outbreak of war in that state.¹³ Yet the Serb domination of large swathes of Bosnia had begun months earlier.¹⁴ In May 1991, there had been military incursions into Bosnia from the Serb-dominated Krajina region of Croatia, described as 'combat preparedness' missions and, by the Autumn, the army occupied important communications centres in Bosnia.¹⁵ On July 12, 1991, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, anticipating the ethnic partition of the republic, had appealed in writing to the EC presidency, requesting a 'goodwill' mission, a measure supported by Bosnian Croats Stjepan

¹¹ *Report from UN Secretary General to Security Council, December 11, 1991, S/23280.* WYNAENDTS, op.cit. p.136, 139 & 141. Wynaendts notes that Vance would not have wanted to offend Milosevic whose support he sought to secure the consent of the Krajina leaders for UN troop deployment.

¹² Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic opposed the Vance Plan, and was later removed by Milosevic.

¹³ See, for instance, GOULDING, op.cit. p.306.

¹⁴ See *Oslobodjenje*, April 10, 12 and 13, and May 25 and 26, and June 10, 1991, for reports of arms smuggling into Bosnia-Herzegovina, and military manoeuvres, in early 1991. According to Yugoslav government sources, between 1991 and 1994 Belgrade paid \$4.73 billion in aid to the Bosnian Serbs and Serb-held territory in Croatia. *Evropske Novosti*, August 5, 1994, quoted in CIGAR. 'The Right to Defence' op.cit. p.45n.

¹⁵ MALCOLM, Noel. *Bosnia, A Short History*, Macmillan, 1994, p.230.

Kljuic and Ivan Markesic, leader and general secretary of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶ In September 1991, the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) took major steps towards the ethnic partition of the republic. Four Serbian Autonomous Regions [SAOs] were declared, incorporating 32 municipalities.¹⁷ It was also proposed to establish a northern corridor through Bosnia to the Serb-held Krajina region of Croatia.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Milosevic opened talks with Adil Zulfikarpasic, leader of the Muslim Bosniac Party (MBO), with just two seats in the Bosnian Assembly, to solicit the support of pliable Muslims.¹⁹ On September 11, 1991, the Bosnian government made a second, unsuccessful, request for EC monitors to Bosnia, and the following week, Bosnians began to mobilise territorial defence units in response to the massive Serb arms buildup throughout Bosnia, orchestrated by Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) MP Mihail Kertes, through the so-called RAM project, whereby large quantities of arms were despatched to Bosnia's Serbs during 1990/91, in readiness for war.²⁰ By early December 1991, Milosevic was already preparing the ground for the anticipated international requirement to withdraw non-Bosnian JNA personnel from Bosnia once it became internationally recognised.²¹ In early January 1992, he issued

¹⁶ Kljuic, a Croat from Sarajevo, challenged Tudjman's aim of dividing Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia, but was soon replaced on Tudjman's orders by Mate Boban, a Croat hardliner.

¹⁷ Dubrovnik (with an 82% Croatian population, according to the 1991 census) was intended as the capital of one SAO based in Trebinje, if the Federation broke up. The largest SAO grew out of the regional association of municipalities of Bosanska Krajina, established in the spring of 1991, before the conflict broke out.

¹⁸ *Borba*, January 3, 1992, p. IX.

¹⁹ CEROVIC, Stojan, in *Vreme*, August 22, 1991.

²⁰ The RAM project was first exposed by the former Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic. See testimony by Markovic in Milosevic trial. *ICTY*, October 23, 2003, p.28029-30. See also GLENNY, Misha. *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, Penguin, 1996, pp.150-151, and evidence by Alexander Vasiljevic at the Milosevic trial. *ICTY*, op.cit. February 6, 2003.

²¹ JOVIC, op.cit. p.420.

a secret order to transfer back to Bosnia all JNA officers born there, in preparation for transforming the Territorial Defence Forces into an army.²² By January 1992, a considerable amount of military hardware was concentrated in Bosnia.

On January 8, 1992, the Serbian municipality of Zvornik was founded,²³ and on the following day, Serbs declared their own republic within Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite warnings that Bosnia's non-Serbs would be driven to press for international recognition. The Declaration, signed by Momcilo Krajisnik as president of the Serb People's Assembly, ensured the incorporation all SAOs established during 1991, with other Serb majority regions, including some areas where Serbs were in a minority. An eighth republic was proposed, as part of the 'Third Yugoslavia' of regions.²⁴ This incorporated 27 municipalities, 19 of them with a Serb majority, and extended to 17,654 sq. km, with 1.2 million people.²⁵ Bosanska Krajina was to join up with Croatian Krajina, Western Slavonia, Lika, Banija and Kordun, and Eastern Slavonia and Baranja with Vojvodina, while Doboj would be incorporated into Bosnian Krajina,²⁶ to link up with Bjeljina in North Eastern Bosnia, and Belgrade, the capital. Together, the Knin and Bosnian Krajinas would extend over 30,354 sq. km, with 1.6 million people, and an outlet to the sea, south of Zadar.

²² SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.*, p.240.

²³ *Borba*, January 8, p.5.

²⁴ *Borba*, January 10, 1992, p.1, and *Le Monde*, January 17, 1992, p.4.

²⁵ It was allegedly endorsed by Montenegro, Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, and communist movements of Macedonia, although the plan itself originated in Milosevic's office. It was also proposed to reorganise the JNA into four military regions, all of them commanded by Serbs. On the day of the Bosnian Serb declaration, Lord Carrington declared his conversation with Milosevic to be "more constructive than usual". *Le Monde*, January 11, 1992, p.4.

²⁶ According to the 1981 census, only 39% of the population in the Doboj district were Serbs. *Borba*, January 10, 1992, p.3, & January 22, 1992, p.11.

On April 11, 1991, Serb politicians in Banja Luka, the regional centre, had formed a community of Krajina Serbian municipalities and, in late 1991, the Prijedor region of northern Bosnia was directed by the SDS leadership to prepare to control all levels of municipal life, including police, finance and communications. The TV station transmitted from Mt Kozara was taken over by Serb paramilitaries, with programmes broadcast to Prijedor inhabitants from Belgrade and Banja Luka only, using virulent anti-Muslim and anti-Croat propaganda. Throughout Bosnia in early 1992, the JNA prepared for war, with troops and equipment stationed in strategic areas, including Zvornik and Foca; reserve units were activated in Brcko and Bosanski Samac, and non-Serb Territorial Defence Forces (TOs) dismantled, with their weapons redistributed to Serb volunteers and paramilitaries.²⁷

The evident self-assurance of Bosnian Serb leaders would have been prompted by a number of factors, domestic and international. With political and financial support from Belgrade, and the JNA under Serbian control, Bosnian Serb leaders would also have noted the 'favourable' international climate, including the appeasement of Vukovar's destruction and the massacre of civilians, and the prompt, unquestioning acceptance by the UN Security Council of a peace plan for Croatia which had originated in Belgrade. The international reluctance to deploy a preventive force to Bosnia, while insisting on preserving the blanket arms embargo, regardless of the imbalance of weaponry on the ground, would have encouraged Serbs in Belgrade and Pale in the belief that their goals in Bosnia might also be achieved with relative impunity.

Particularly crucial to the 'Greater Serbia' project was the position of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Soviet Union and America, after early declarations supporting a united Yugoslavia, had taken a back seat on the conflict, while China could generally be

²⁷ See GOW, James. *The Serbian Project and its adversaries*, op.cit. p.121-129.

expected to assume a neutral stance.²⁸ British and French policy would have been closely monitored and noted, therefore, as would the mindset of the newly-appointed UN Secretary General and his advisers.

Croatia: UNPROFOR deployment

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 743 dated February 21, 1992 provided for the withdrawal of armed forces from Croatia, reconciliation between Croatia and the Croatian Serb communities, and a future constitutional settlement. United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) were to be established in areas where Serbs were in a majority or substantial minority, with a mandate to ensure the security and protection of the human rights of all persons living within those zones, and to facilitate the safe return of displaced civilians to their homes in the UNPAs. In areas like Eastern Slavonia where there had never been a Serb majority,²⁹ the Plan implied that Croatian authority should be re-established. Yet, without police restructuring, Croatian refugees were unlikely to return, especially since the UN troops were to be lightly armed, solely for self-defence.³⁰

Sharp divergences emerged between the Serbian and Croatian positions on the interpretation of the UN resolution, which Marrack Goulding and other British diplomats played a key role in attempting to reconcile.³¹

²⁸ The Soviet Union had disintegrated by December 1991, and its successor states were too embroiled with internal problems to become fully involved in developments in the Balkans. In the United States, with an election less than a year away, Yugoslavia had reportedly become a 'tar baby'. ZIMMERMANN, op.cit. pp.170-1.

²⁹ Table 1 [page 73]. See also SHOUP, Paul. 'The Future of Croatia's Border Regions, *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, November 29, 1991, pp.26-33, for an analysis of the ethnic composition of disputed areas in Croatia.

³⁰ As the EC Monitoring Mission head remarked "would not the [Vance Plan] in these conditions lead to the ratification and protection of Serb territorial gains?" WYNAENDTS_op.cit. p.140.

³¹ *Le Monde*, February 23-24, 1992, p.3, & February 25, 1992, p.3. Both Borisav Jovic and UN Commander Lewis MacKenzie record the influence wielded by Marrack Goulding and Cedric

**Ethnic Composition of Districts
in Western Syrmia**

DISTRICT AND YEAR	POPULATION	CROATS	SERBS (in percentages)	YUGOSLAVS
Zupanja				
1981	48,001	86.8	3.3	3.5
1991	48,876	87.6	2.4	1.4
Vinkovci				
1981	95,245	74.8	13.4	7.4
1991	98,484	80.0	13.0	1.9
Vukovar				
1981	81,203	37.1	31.0	22.2
1991	84,024	43.7	37.4	7.3
Osijek				
1981	158,790	57.2	18.0	18.8
1991	164,577	66.6	20.0	5.0
<hr/>				
Totals				
1981	383,239	61.0	17.7	14.8
1991	395,961	68.0	20.0	4.0

**Ethnic Composition of Baranja
(Beli Manastir Region)**

DISTRICT AND YEAR	POPULATION	CROATS	SERBS	YUGOSLAVS	HUNGARIANS
1981	53,409	35.8	24.1	16.6	18.6
1991	54,160	41.7	25.5	7.9	16.5

Sources: *Nacionalni Sastav Stanovništva SFR Jugoslavije po Naseljima I Opstinama* [The National Composition of the Population of SFR Yugoslavia by Settlements and Districts] (Belgrade: Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, 1991); and *Bulletin of the Republican Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Croatia*, July 19, 1991; and *Vjesnik* (Zagreb) July 29, 1991.

**Table 1
Ethnic Composition of Eastern Slavonia**

Under the conditions of implementation outlined by Goulding, the Plan would remain a dead letter in crucial aspects.¹ The international negotiators were aware, however, that Tudjman, a prisoner of his desire for acceptance within Europe, was considerably more malleable than his Serbian counterpart. Accordingly, Goulding exerted considerable pressure on Croatia to agree to longer term UN deployment, and to the local administration reflecting the postwar status quo, which would leave the UNPA zones (over 30% of Croatia) effectively in the hands of about 200,000 Serbs,² with their borders protected by UN troops. It would also imply *de facto* UN recognition of illegitimate bodies set up in the wake of aggression.

Croatia rejected Goulding's conditions, arguing that they not only contravened Croatia's territorial sovereignty but weakened the position of the UN troops, requiring them to seek the consent of Serb authorities instated by force³ and, crucially, would block the return of the 300,000 Croats displaced by war. A flurry of diplomatic activity ensued from Goulding's visit, drawing in British Ambassador Peter Hall who enlisted the federal authorities to persuade Tudjman that the rapid deployment of UN troops was necessary to secure peace.⁴ On February 6, Lord Carrington visited Croatia, and met with Tudjman.⁵ The following day, Tudjman accepted the Plan. UNSCR 743 confirmed that the UN force should remain at least one year. Croatia's request for a shorter mandate

¹ The anomalies inherent in the Vance Plan were illustrated later that year, as UNPROFOR civil affairs chief, Cedric Thornberry, barred Croatian refugees from returning to Baranja where Serb forces threatened their safety. *Novi Vjesnik*, August 16, 1992, p.5A.

² See SHOUP, Paul. *RFE/RL Report*, November 29, 1991, op.cit.

³ 'Plavi sljemovi, olovnih nogu', *Borba*, February 4, 1992, p.8, and February 5, p.1. See also *Le Monde*, February 1, 1992, p.6, for an analysis of the different standpoints of the Serbian and Croatian leaderships, and February 23-24, 1992, p.3.

⁴ 'Mirovne snage ili novi rat' [A peacekeeping force or a new war]. *Borba*, February 6, 1992, p.1.

⁵ See WYNAENDTS, op.cit. p.142-3, for a description of the meeting where he recounts how Carrington's 'badinage' embarrassed Tudjman in front of his guests.

had been disregarded, breaking with the usual UN practice of securing the prior consent of all parties concerned.⁶

Under pressure from Belgrade,⁷ Goulding later sought Croatia's agreement to a number of 'pink zones', areas under Serb control but not included in the Vance Plan.⁸ In September 1992, the UN Secretary General informed the Security Council that the Vance Plan was being used by the Krajina as a means of affirming its independence, and that the refusal of the Knin authorities to accept demilitarisation and the return of refugees had "undermined two fundamental principles of the UN Plan."⁹ Of course, the UN never formally recognised the "Serbian Republic of Krajina", but UN policy encouraged in the occupying power the sense that it was tolerated, affecting the ongoing negotiations for a settlement based on Croatian sovereignty, and laying the ground for an eventual Croatian counter-offensive.

The UNPROFOR presence succeeded in considerably lowering the level of hostilities in Croatia, but it also cemented the ethnic divide. Before withdrawing, the Yugoslav Army had handed over a large quantity of its weapons and ammunition, and transferred some of its troops to local Serb paramilitary forces, contrary to the Vance Plan which required the demobilisation of all paramilitaries. A small number of heavier weapons were stored under the formal supervision of UNPROFOR but within reach of local militias so that demilitarisation, an integral part of the Vance plan, was never carried out in practice.¹⁰ Serb territorial defence

⁶ *The Times*, February 19, 1992, p.11.

⁷ JOVIC, op.cit. p.439-440. The UN Secretary General later indicated that UNPROFOR and the EC observer mission should assist in reinstating the Croatian authorities there, and expressed his gratitude to the Croatian government for its flexibility relating to the 'pink zones'.

⁹ *Report by UN Secretary General to the Security Council*, September 28, 1992, S/24600.

¹⁰ Wynaendts records the continuing presence of heavy weaponry, blue-painted APCs, and police formations. The UN Secretary-General also reported the Serb enclaves' economic dependence on Belgrade, which could have forced demilitarisation, had it chosen to do so. *UNSG Report to the Security Council*. November 24, 1992, S/24848, quoted WYNAENDTS, op.cit. p.145.

units and local militias were mostly reconverted into police units, in defiance of UNPROFOR. The local militias remained omnipresent, and the 'blue berets could not prevent intimidation and the most brutal forms of ethnic cleansing'.¹¹ Moreover, secure in the presence of UNPROFOR, the Serb authorities in the "protected areas" began the mass expulsion of the non-Serbian population from occupied territories, looting and destroying their property, and creating conditions for the permanent separation of these areas from Croatia, to the point that UNPROFOR officers declared that security conditions did not permit their repatriation,¹² thereby unwittingly reinforcing the objectives of the Krajina leaders. By November, the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had concluded that UNPROFOR's failure in Croatia was due to the increasing contempt displayed by the Knin authorities towards both the Security Council and UNPROFOR.¹³

The Cutileiro Plan

In January 1992, Portugal took over the EC Presidency, and the Peace Conference moved to Brussels. Since Serbia's rejection of the EC Conference proposals in October there had been no further formal meeting, and Lord Carrington, who considered Croatia's recognition had scuppered the Conference, briefly contemplated resigning,¹⁴ but was persuaded to remain and address the political future of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The plan he developed, in close coordination with Belgrade, came to be known as the Lisbon Agreement, or the Cutileiro Plan after Portuguese foreign minister Jose Cutileiro, who chaired the EC Council

¹¹ WYNAENDTS, *Ibid.* p.145-6.

¹² *Novi Vjesnik*, *op.cit.* p.5A.

¹³ *UNSG Report to the Security Council*, *op.cit.* S/24848.

¹⁴ 'Lord Karington odustaje?' (Will Lord Carrington resign?) *Borba*, January 3, 1992, p.6.

of Ministers.¹⁵ The Cutileiro Plan introduced into the international peace process the concept of territorial division according to ethnic criteria which characterised all subsequent peace plans and, in November 1995, formed the basis for the Dayton Agreement.

In early February, Lord Carrington travelled to Belgrade to set in motion a conference for the cantonisation of Bosnia. Mindful perhaps of Milosevic's warning of the inevitability of civil war in Bosnia without an agreement between the three communities prior to independence,¹⁶ Carrington intended that the conference precede the referendum called by the Bosnian government for March 1, in accordance with the recommendations of the Arbitration (Badinter) Commission. Carrington's initiative was well received by the Bosnian Serb leadership.¹⁷ Indeed, Radovan Karadzic referred to 'a good degree of understanding' with the chair of the Peace Conference, and of plans for 'Switzerland, Bosnian style'.¹⁸ The ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the ethnic communities were so intermingled, would not have been feasible without large-scale population resettlement. But the EC Conference endorsement of the initiative facilitated Karadzic's argument that the international community had 'recognized our right to a separate state,

¹⁵ Cutileiro was often considered an 'anglophile', having obtained a doctorate at Oxford University, followed by six years at St. Antony's and the LSE. According to one of the Bosnian government delegates to the talks, however, Lord Carrington was the main force behind the 'Cutileiro' Plan. Author's discussion with former Deputy Bosnian government leader, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, op.cit. See also Muhamed Filipovic's account of the negotiations in *Dani*, 167, August 11, 2000. For further discussion of proposals for Bosnia's partition, see also BURG & SHOUP, op.cit. p.104.

¹⁶ WYNAENDTS, op.cit. p.50.

¹⁷ The reference here is to the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) of which Radovan Karadzic was the leader. However, it should be noted that Serbs who opposed the SDS ideology were often victims of harassment, dismissal and incarceration. Many were killed by the Bosnian Serb Army for attempting to defend their Muslim neighbours. *US State Department Report*, January 31, 1994, Section 2a.

¹⁸ 'Svajcarska na bosanski nacin'. *Borba*, February 9, 1992, p.3 and 5.

based on an ethnic principle'.¹⁹ In Lisbon on February 23, the three Bosnian leaders, Alija Izetbegovic, Radovan Karadzic and Mate Boban²⁰ agreed in principle to the EC proposal for a confederation divided into three ethnic units. Karadzic was reported to be 'ecstatic' over developments in Lisbon.²¹ Izetbegovic, however, voiced strong reservations, insisting he had agreed only due to European pressure.²² It has since been claimed that the Plan was the last chance for peace in Bosnia, and that US Ambassador Warren Zimmerman was responsible for Izetbegovic's rejection of the Plan.²³ Zimmerman himself records that he encouraged the Bosnian leader to adhere to what he had agreed to, and argue the details later. According to Zimmerman, Cutileiro confirmed it was the Bosnian Serbs who had rejected the map.²⁴

On March 16-17, 1992, a new series of negotiations took place in Sarajevo, headed by Cutileiro. In the early hours of the following day, the

¹⁹ In a State of the Republic address in 1996, Karadzic stated: "the significance of the Lisbon Agreement was much larger than it sometimes seems. Before the recognition of independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of Srpska was recognized as a condition for that recognition. This Parliament had established Srpska two months before the Lisbon Agreement, under the name of Srpska [Serb] Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. That recognition within the scope of the Lisbon Agreement was the recognition of our centuries-old historic national rights, and came as a result of the legal political struggle of the Serb deputies in the Bosnian Parliament and the support of all patriotic forces in the former Bosnia and our motherland and Serb Krajina." *Telegraf*, Belgrade, April 16, 1996. [Published in translation]

²⁰ On February 2, 1992, Tudjman replaced Stjepan Kljuic, a moderate Croat from Sarajevo who had consistently opposed ethnic partition, with Mate Boban, a HDZ hardliner.

²¹ ZIMMERMAN, Warren, *Origins of a Catastrophe*. Times Books, 1999, p.189.

²² 'I was astonished by the EC proposal for the creation of ethnically based regions. This could create three states within Bosnia and amount to partition from within'. Izetbegovic to Zimmerman, *Ibid.* p.190.

²³ Radovan Karadzic, *Telegraf*, April 16, 1996, *op.cit.* WOODWARD, *op.cit.* p.281; BINDER, David. 'U.S. policymakers on Bosnia admit errors in opposing partition in 1992'. *New York Times* August 29, 1993, George Bogdanich, *Diplomatic License, CNN*, March 30, 2002, and Radovan Radinovic, Krstic Trial, *ICTY*, December 4, 2000, p.7813. For further discussion of the Cutileiro proposals, see BURG & SHOUP, *op.cit.* pp.108-116.

²⁴ Zimmerman, *Ibid.* p.190. It was only following the 'bread queue' massacre in Sarajevo on May 27 that the Bosnian government broke off negotiations. See *Povratak u buducnost*, (Return to the Future), *Dani*, No.215, July 20, 2001.

three Bosnian leaders agreed to a "declaration of principles", according to which Bosnia and Herzegovina would be composed of three constitutive units, established on ethnic principles, with account taken of economic, geographic and other criteria. The assembly was to be composed of two chambers, one elective, the other constituting an equal number of representatives from each constitutive unit. The Serbs interpreted this as permitting the right to each of the communities to establish a distinct and coherent geographic entity, while the Bosnian government believed such a division to be unrealisable. To create cantons with an absolute ethnic majority would have involved resettling at least 250,000 people in five municipalities. A further 22 municipalities, with a combined population of 1,200,000, were so ethnically mixed that many communities would have needed to be uprooted. The following week, the Serbs proclaimed the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a Serb police force. The partition lines were drawn, and warlords Seselj and Arkan moved their forces into eastern Bosnia, which remained one of the main Serb strategic objectives throughout the war.²⁵

The Cutileiro Plan foundered partly because it was unrealisable on the ground but, more directly, because the territorial demands of the Bosnian Serb leadership exceeded what, at the time, the EC was prepared to offer, since both union with Serbia and a state within a state - a Serb republic within Bosnia-Herzegovina - were solutions which would have created unacceptable international precedents. One of the main legacies of the Plan, however, was the implicit endorsement of 'ethnic cleansing' which had begun well before, and indeed prompted, Bosnia's vote for independence in October 1991, by which time the Serb

²⁵ See BELL, Martin. *In Harm's Way*, Hamish Hamilton, 1995, p.19-21, for an eyewitness account of the expulsion of Zvornik's Muslims in the first week of the Bosnian war, and SUDETIC, Chuck. *Blood and Vengeance*, Norton, NY, 1998, p.120-125, for the expulsion of Visegrad's Muslims. By April 12, 1992, UNHCR officials noted that 'almost overnight the republic broke apart', estimating that 10,000 had fled from Zvornik, 5,000 from Cajnice and Gorazde, 5,000 from Foca, 2,000 from Bosanski Brod and 5,000 from Kupres. HONIG, Jan Willem and BOTH, Norbert. *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, Penguin, 1996, p.73.

autonomous areas had already been consolidated, and weapons distributed to Serb communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina from Belgrade. The Plan also confirmed that the European Community was prepared to accept territorial division based on primarily ethnic considerations, which was used by Karadzic and others in arguing for ethnic separation at subsequent peace talks. The Cutileiro Plan attempted to preempt war in Bosnia by appeasement of the strongest group, the Serbs. The Bosnian Serb leaders, however, mindful of the international handling of the Croatian war, evidently calculated that they could achieve more by war than at the Conference table. The Cutileiro Plan was succeeded by other partition plans, mainly under the aegis of British diplomats, until the establishment of a Serb republic within Bosnia, Karadzic's main war objective, was eventually achieved through the Dayton Agreement in 1995.

House of Commons: January/March 1992

British parliamentary proceedings in 1992 followed much the same pattern as the previous year in regard to the Yugoslav crisis, with decisions taken outside parliament, and where the information imparted by ministers and expert witnesses did not always contribute an accurate contribution to Members' understanding of the issue.

A report by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee (FAC) warned of the impending conflagration in Bosnia.²⁶ Yet, during two FAC sessions in mid January, despite discussion on conflict prevention in general terms, the issue of imminent war in Bosnia was not raised, and British senior policy advisers questioned by the FAC were unable to

²⁶ "...The Select Committee, whose members visited parts of the former Yugoslavia, found again and again witnesses saying that what had been going on in Croatia...was merely the prelude to further conflicts...as we debate the issue...Bosnia-Herzegovina is in great danger... We hear reports that Sarajevo is like a tinder-box, that peace is on a knife edge..." David Howell, *Yugoslavia*, March 5, 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.204, c.461-2.

shed light on a number of technical and other questions arising from the recognition of the two ex-Yugoslav states.²⁷ In British political circles, the preference was seemingly to let matters take their course.²⁸ The foreign secretary set the tone. Questioned in mid-January on the EC role in preventing Bosnia's disintegration, Hurd replied, "more time and negotiation is needed on that. I do not know of anyone with an impulse to make haste on that."²⁹

The House of Commons debate on the FAC Report in early March proved to be the most wide-ranging, albeit inconclusive, debate on the crisis since the beginning of the war. Senior Conservative MPs Bernard Braine and Julian Amery made broad-ranging contributions to the debate, in reminding the House that Serbs had been Britain's allies in two world wars, and would require a formidable international force to defeat them. This influenced the thinking of some MPs, and would have been noted with interest in Belgrade. Their speeches, therefore, merit some analysis.

Julian Amery, claiming personal wartime experience in Yugoslavia, reminded the House of the reunification of Germany and its current dominance in Europe, in terms recalling graphic images of World War II,³⁰ counterposing this with "...a word about the Serbs. I am all against people making hobbies of Balkan countries. This has bedeviled our studies of them both before and after the first world war...The Serbs are

²⁷ Evidence offered by Michael Jay, Under Secretary of State of the European Community, Michael Tait, Assistant Under Secretary of State, Eastern Europe, John Goulden, Assistant Under Secretary of State, Arms Control, and Peter Ludlow, Director of the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels, was examined. Foreign Affairs Committee, January 15, 1992.

²⁸ Foreign Affairs Committee. January 14, 1992, para.412.

²⁹ Julian Amery, Yugoslavia, March 5, 1992, op.cit., c.469.

³⁰ 'Germany dominates the scene today and Austria is once again a part of Germany. It is not an official anschluss, but the strength of Germany is once again not very different from what it was at the beginning of 1938...I do not know the extent of the lebensraum that Germany quite naturally...will seek'. Julian Amery, *Ibid.* c. 470.

a remarkable nation."³¹ Amery recalled that "in the second world war, their people rose like one man to throw out the Government who were prepared to make them satellites of Hitler. Much as they fought each other, their resistance movements were the most remarkable in Europe."³² He was less impressed by the Sandzak people. '[I]n my experience [they] are Albanian on Monday, Serbian on Tuesday, Christian on Wednesday, Muslim on Thursday, and at the weekend I am not sure what they are. I do not think that they have changed very much...' Amery appeared unaware of the World War II record in the Sandzak of what he referred to as the 'remarkable [Serb] nation'.³³

More significant for his British listeners were Amery's warnings against entering war with Serbia: '...this is a formidable country with formidable people, and the decisions that we must take could put us on the wrong side of them'.³⁴ When veteran MP Tam Dalyell, later to prove one of

³¹ Julian Amery, *Ibid*, c.470.

³² Following the initial coup by Serbian officers in Belgrade on 27 March 1941, there was a total collapse of the Yugoslav armed forces on all fronts. According to one of the leaders of the coup, General Simovic: "Almost all generals were against fighting....When the generals wanted the armistice as soon as possible, in order to return to their families, what could one expect from the rank and file?" TOMASEVIC, Jozo. *The Chetniks. War and Revolution in Yugoslavia. 1941-1945*. Stanford University Press, 1975, p.75. According to another historian, by late 1941 'the Cetniks in Serbia ceased to be a fairly compact and autonomous resistance group and gradually became attached to collaborationist 'legalised' leaders, where they functioned as police detachments with at least some loyalty to the puppet regime in Belgrade as well as to Mihailovic [who] was losing control of some of his officers and had virtually no effective fighting force left under his immediate command'. MILAZZO, Matteo J., *The Chetnik Movement & The Yugoslav Resistance*, John Hopkins University Press, 1975, pp.40-41. After 1990, much revisionist writing appeared, promoting the Cetnik contribution. See, for instance, LEES, David. *The Rape of Serbia*. op.cit. and BELOFF, Nora. *Tito's Flawed Legacy*, op.cit.

³³ In December 1941, the *Cetnik* leader Draza Mihailovic had ordered the Montenegrin Cetniks to concentrate their efforts near the Sandzak, Kosovo and Albania to fight the Muslims and Albanians. Captain Pavel Djuricic, appointed by Mihailovic as commander of all 'regular and reserve troops' in central and East Montenegro, and part of Sandzak, was to remove the Muslim and Arnaut [Albanian Muslim] population from Pestar; another group was to push in the direction of Metohija "to clear out the Arnauts"; still another detachment was to seize Scutari and protect Southern Montenegro against Arnaut attacks from Albania'. By January 1942 Cetnik activity in the Sandzak was significant enough for a CP Central Committee directive to instruct the partisans to mobilize Muslim anti-Serb resentment to boost their own ranks. MILAZZO, *Ibid*. p.46. Both Milazzo and Tomasevich drew extensively on unpublished source materials, including records of Italian and German occupation forces and Cetnik and Yugoslav government-in-exile papers.

³⁴ Amery, *Yugoslavia*, op.cit. c.470.

parliament's most outspoken opponents of military intervention in Bosnia,³⁵ asked whether to commit troops "albeit with United Nations berets, into that mire, would beg the question: in what circumstances could those troops ever be withdrawn?" Amery replied, 'I thought that I went rather further than that when I recalled that Hitler needed nine divisions to keep the roads open'.³⁶ The myth of Serbian military invincibility, carried through the corridors of Whitehall and several academic institutions, was a major inhibiting factor in the context of international military intervention in Bosnia.³⁷

Sir Bernard Braine took up the theme: '..during the two world wars, the Serbs were our gallant allies from the beginning. I have never forgotten the resistance of Yugoslavia and Greece during the second world war'.³⁸ Asserting that Yugoslavia made a major contribution to the ultimate defeat of the Nazis, Braine concluded: 'We cannot be unsympathetic to the Serbs. We must remember that Croats in Nazi uniform massacred vast numbers of Serbs. The memory of that is still vivid in Serbian minds...'³⁹

The apparent confusion about the Serbian, as opposed to the overall Yugoslav, partisan contribution to the defeat of the Axis powers in Yugoslavia in World War II led to a number of miscalculations on the part of certain Western commentators and others in the 1990s, in assessing the number of troops needed to suppress the fighting and restore peace to the region. In their tributes to Serbia, Amery and Braine

³⁵ Three years later, Dalyell quoted Amery on the 'strength, determination and training of Yugoslavian soldiers'. *Bosnia*, May 31, 1995, *Hansard*, Vol.208, c.1049.

³⁶ Amery, *Yugoslavia*, op.cit. c.471.

³⁷ For a different view of the Serbian military strength, see STONE, Norman. 'Shooting down the myth of Serbia's mighty guerillas'. *Sunday Times*, August 16, 1992.

³⁸ Sir Bernard Braine, *Yugoslavia*, op.cit. c.477.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

seemed to be arguing that Serbia equals Yugoslavia, *ergo* Yugoslavia equals Serbia! All wartime achievements in occupied Yugoslavia were consequently attributed to Serbia, despite evidence to the contrary.⁴⁰

Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg, in summing up, made little comment on concerns raised in the debate by a number of MPs, including the rising tensions in Bosnia. The government position was evident, however, in the respective emphasis placed on the rights of Serbs in Croatia and Albanians in Kosovo. On the latter, Hogg merely proposed that they be addressed within the context of the Peace Conference, whereas 'the rights of the Serbs in Croatia are of critical importance...The matter plays an important part in the draft treaty prepared by...Lord Carrington'.⁴¹ At that time, while the percentage of Albanians in Serbia exceeded that of Serbs in Croatia, there was a distinct human and civil rights disparity between the two minority groups. The Yugoslav crisis was not debated fully in the House of Commons again before the summer recess.

Sarajevo: April/May 1992

In early April, the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognised by the United States and the European Community. At this time, the sporadic fighting which had already broken out in a number of areas intensified, exacerbated by the JNA withdrawal from Croatia under the terms of the Vance Plan. Sarajevo came under siege, and a massive campaign of bombardment and 'ethnic cleansing' ensued, extending to

⁴⁰ See OROVIC, Savo. *Ratni Dnevnik 1941-1945*. Hronometar, Belgrade, 1972, pp.617-627, for details of the formation of battalions in the Yugoslav partisan resistance movement. According to Professor Ivo Banac of Yale University, only a minority of Croats sided with the *Ustasa* and, in the absence of a Croat non-communist resistance movement, Croats joined up with the Partisans. "The fearful asymmetry of war: the causes and consequences of Yugoslavia's demise" *Daedalus*, 121(2), 1992, p.154.

⁴¹ Douglas Hogg, *Yugoslavia*, op.cit. c.489.

most parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, bringing nearly 70% of the state under Serb control, a situation viewed by the ICRC as having 'elements both of an international armed conflict...and of an internal armed conflict'.⁴²

On April 14, US Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was sent a confidential memorandum by a staff analyst, detailing 'the clear pattern of use of force, intimidation and provocation to violence aimed at forcibly partitioning [Bosnia] and effecting large forced transfers of population...in a manner which would create a "Serbian Bosnia."' ⁴³ By May 1992, US intelligence, through agents on the ground, spy satellites and extensive interception of radio and telephone communications, reportedly had knowledge of the Serb camps,⁴⁴ and, by June, detailed accounts of an organised effort to displace and terrorise an estimated 500,000 Muslims in Bosnia.⁴⁵ The Bush Administration did not officially condemn the camps, however, until their public disclosure in early August by Western journalists.

In early April, a Canadian General, Lewis MacKenzie, was appointed UN commander to oversee the Croatian UNPA mission, and based in Sarajevo, the headquarters chosen by the UN as a token presence in Bosnia. Curiously, MacKenzie and his team were transported via Belgrade to Sarajevo in JNA transport, and initially accommodated in JNA barracks.⁴⁶ From the outset, MacKenzie adopted a view so markedly hostile to the Bosnian Presidency that it led to his precipitate removal

⁴² *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/55 (1998). "Srebrenica Report, p.8/16.*

⁴³ POWER, Samantha, *"A Problem from Hell". America and the Age of Genocide.* Basic Books, 2002, p.264.

⁴⁴ POWER, Ibid. p.269.

⁴⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle, August 15, 1992, A11/12.*

⁴⁶ MACKENZIE, Lewis. *Peacekeeper: The Road to Sarajevo.* Douglas & McIntyre, 1993, p.122.

from Bosnia just four months later.⁴⁷ MacKenzie's role in the crucial early weeks of the Bosnian war would have had a significant impact on external perceptions. Also, MacKenzie's briefing by the UN Secretariat in New York, and his sojourn in Belgrade prior to deployment in Bosnia, may not have been irrelevant to the speed with which the Canadian general arrived at his controversial conclusions.

On May 6, MacKenzie noted that he spent the day briefing Marrack Goulding, who had also travelled by JNA helicopter to Pale, the Bosnian Serb headquarters outside Sarajevo.⁴⁸ Following Goulding's visit, the editor of *Oslobodjenje*, Zlatko Dizdarevic, commented:

When Marrack Goulding...arrived here as a high-ranking UN official, and after seeing all that has happened here... declared that 'all sides are equally responsible', we had to realize at last that this latest maneuver was no more than a matter of dirty politics.⁴⁹

On May 7, Goulding met in Belgrade with Borisav Jovic, the UN Force Commander, Satish Nambiar, and UN Civil Affairs Director Cedric Thornberry. Jovic noted that at the meeting

Goulding stressed that arrangements concerning the army must be worked out very carefully because 'around 80% of the JNA would pass to Dr Karadzic. That will have a very negative influence in securing a political solution.' If now, Goulding says, the federal organs 'lift their hands' from the JNA in [Bosnia] and if they say that the solution is nothing to do with them, that will only increase the danger of a wider conflict. In this transitional phase, [Goulding]

⁴⁷ In a letter to '50 friends and colleagues' on April 19, MacKenzie described Bosnia as being in a state of anarchy, with 'enough blame to go around for all sides', and alleged that the actions of the Bosnian forces were beginning to have 'serious repercussions in Sarajevo'. Describing the Serbs as showing 'considerable constraint', MacKenzie ascribed their shelling of Sarajevo to Serb 'overreaction' to Bosnian provocation, and consistently argued that the Bosnian Muslims were shelling their own people in order to provoke international military intervention. Ibid. pp. 152 & 159.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.178.

⁴⁹ DIZDAREVIC, Zlatko. *Sarajevo - A War Journal*. Fromm International, New York, 1993, p.16. Dizdarevic notes that Marrack Goulding was known in Sarajevo as 'Milosevic's last official comrade'. Ibid. p.49.

considers, the JNA under the command of General Adzic has been, and can be, a stabilising factor.⁵⁰

The UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council, dated May 12, based on Marrack Goulding's visit,⁵¹ concluded that

All international observers agree that what is happening is a concerted effort by the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the acquiescence of, and at least some support from, the JNA, to create 'ethnically pure' regions in the context of negotiations on the 'cantonisation' of the Republic...Further concern has been caused by the decision of the Belgrade authorities to withdraw from Bosnia and Herzegovina by 18 May all JNA personnel who are not citizens of that Republic. This will leave in Bosnia and Herzegovina, without effective political control, as many as 50,000 mostly Serb troops and their weapons. They are likely to be taken over by the Serb party...The fighting and intimidation have led to massive displacement of civilians...The international community's efforts to bring succour to these suffering people are greatly obstructed by the warring parties whose demographic objectives they may frustrate...The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is tragic, dangerous, violent and confused. I do not think that in its present phase this conflict is susceptible to the United Nations peacekeeping treatment... One of the more distressing features of the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that, for all their fair words, none of the parties there can claim to [respect the United Nations, its personnel and its mandate]...⁵²

The report sent a crucial signal to all the communities, not least the Serbs. While it identified Bosnian Serb responsibility, with JNA support, for the 'ethnic cleansing' and linked it to the Cutileiro Plan, it reduced the impact of that statement by implying that the withdrawal of non-Bosnian JNA personnel would have a destabilising effect in Bosnia, which demonstrated a total lack of understanding of the role of the JNA, but reflected the tone of the meeting in Belgrade.⁵³ The report also

⁵⁰ JOVIC, op.cit. p.449-450. [author's translation]

⁵¹ Wynaendts remarks that the UN Secretary-General himself was 'extremely laconic' on the issue of UN troop deployment. WYNAENDTS, op.cit. p.141.

⁵² *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.9/24 & 26.

⁵³ See account of the meeting by JOVIC, op.cit. p.449-50

referred to 'as many as 50,000 Serb troops' left in Bosnia after the withdrawal of non-Bosnian JNA personnel, whereas Jovic in his diary records that there were as many as 90,000!⁵⁴ Equally, reference to the 'warring parties' with 'demographic objectives' suggests an equivalence of guilt, and takes no account of the nature of the events unfolding on the ground and the systematic execution of the Serb expansionist policy. The report implied further moral equivalence by stating that the behaviour of all sides had been responsible for the decision not to deploy UN troops. That decision, and the bias of the Secretary-General's report (based on Goulding's visit), in the absence of any alternative beyond sanctions to halt the onslaught, effectively gave the green light to the perpetrators.

The US State Department was less supine. On April 14, it had condemned the JNA for military interference in Bosnia's internal affairs, naming the Serbian leadership as the main culprit and warning that measures would be taken to isolate Serbia economically and politically, provoking an angry response from the Serbian government.⁵⁵ Lord Carrington, however, brought Croatia into the guilt frame, warning both Croatia and Serbia that they would face severe international sanctions if they continued to interfere in Bosnia-Herzegovina's internal affairs.⁵⁶ Carrington had also visited Sarajevo in May, with a single message for Bosnian President Izetbegovic - to negotiate.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.448.

⁵⁵ *Chronology of events in Yugoslavia, 1992.* www.balkan-archive.org.yu

⁵⁶ Also, EC President Joao de Pinheiro stated on British television that 'Serbia is not the only culprit for the situation in Bosnia'. Ibid. While some senior Croatian politicians had similar territorial ambitions to the Serbs, the HVO (Bosnian Croat Army) at this time fought against the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS), alongside the embryonic Bosnian government forces.

⁵⁷ When Izetbegovic replied that capitulation was the only basis on which Karadzic would 'negotiate', Carrington retorted 'you obviously don't know what you're dealing with. I'm sorry but you don't have any chance'. IZETBEGOVIC, Alija. *Inescapable Questions*, The Islamic Foundation, 2003, p.476.

In the meantime, a Serbian exile resident in Paris, Boris Vukobrat, working closely with Sir Fitzroy Maclean in Scotland, produced a programme for the reconstitution of Yugoslavia on a regional basis.⁵⁸ In the climate prevailing in much of former Yugoslavia in June 1992, it is unlikely that the programme, as proposed, would have been considered by non-Serbs. The involvement of in such a plan by senior diplomat, close to the Foreign Office, however, suggests that UN recognition of the Yugoslav successor states may not necessarily have been perceived within British diplomatic circles as a permanent solution.

UN Sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro

On May 30, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, including a trade and air embargo, and suspension of sports and cultural contacts, with exemption for food and medicine.⁵⁹ According to the UN Srebrenica Report, however,

most of the territory captured by the Serbs was secured by them within the first 60 days of the war...During those 60 days, approximately one million people were displaced from their homes. Several tens of thousands of people, most of them Bosnian Muslims, were killed.⁶⁰

All this activity took place, in other words, before the imposition of UN sanctions. The British government's promotion of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro fuelled the argument that Britain had conducted

⁵⁸ VUKOB RAT, Boris I. 'Projekat za novu zajednicu'. May 1, 1992. Unpublished manuscript. See also VUKOB RAT, B. 'L'impasse yougoslave', in *Le Figaro*, March 3, 1992, and Ibid. 'Now Help Put Yugoslavs Back Together', *International Herald Tribune*, April 15, 1992.

⁵⁹ Security Council Resolution 757, May 30, 1992.

⁶⁰ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit.

an anti-Serb policy during the Bosnian war,⁶¹ or that it was at least impartial. On the other hand, as one critic remarked, sanctions provided a stopgap response to those who argued that more should be done, temporarily silencing the proponents of military intervention.⁶² US Secretary of State James Baker, in particular, had begun to press for stronger measures against the Serbs, and a few experts within British academic circles began to view military intervention as feasible.⁶³

On June 2, the Foreign Secretary made a statement to the House of Commons, announcing the measures adopted.⁶⁴ Thirty minutes were allocated for questions which came from across the political spectrum, demonstrating a wide variety of concerns. Cross party splits emerged, even amongst Ulster Unionists, on the international response to the conflict. This was in marked contrast to the clear accord between the government and the opposition Front Bench on the issue. The Foreign Secretary acknowledged that

under the pretext of withdrawal, [Milosevic] has transferred large parts of the federal army to local command in Bosnia. Those warlords are using terror as a political weapon to create ethnically pure Serbian areas which will be attached to Serbia itself.⁶⁵

He nonetheless confirmed that the arms embargo would not be lifted, and demonstrated little commitment to enforcing the sanctions.

⁶¹ Jasna Dragovic-Soso, at School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, June 17, 2000.

⁶² EYAL, Jonathan, Director, Royal United Services Institute, June 5, 1992.

⁶³ 'The Institute of Strategic Studies and other military people say that, if we had the will, the fighting could be stopped within 24 hours'. John McFall, *Yugoslavia (Sanctions)*, June 2, 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.208, c.722.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* c.714.

⁶⁵ Douglas Hurd, *Yugoslavia (Sanctions)*, *op.cit.* c.714.

There are no plans for [a naval blockade] at present...a monitoring committee has been set up in New York. We shall have to see what happens, especially with regard to oil supplies, which traditionally have come down the Danube through Romania, but it is premature to assume that people will not comply with their obligations...The monitoring committee...will be able to pick up breaches, and we will then need to decide what measures might be useful in dealing with them."⁶⁶

In other words, the burden of enforcement was to fall to neighbouring states.⁶⁷ When asked in more specific terms how sanctions would be monitored, the foreign secretary responded through ridicule, a style he not infrequently adopted in parrying difficult questions:

I have just answered the... hon. gentleman's question. He was too busy preparing it to listen to my answer...There is some oil production in Serbia and Croatia, but most oil is imported. It is therefore important that the flow of oil should be monitored by the sanctions committee, which I described to the House when [he] was not listening.⁶⁸

Later, however, it was acknowledged that the sanctions committee had not succeeded in stemming the flow of oil into Serbia.⁶⁹ In fact, the sanctions made little contribution to ending the war, but they did harden Serbian intransigence. Six months later, the importation of oil and consumer goods had become highly lucrative, with local banks paying hard-currency depositors 12-14% monthly interest to raise funds to underwrite imports. Half a million Serbs opened accounts with the Yugoslav and Dalmatian banks, the latter boasting an estimated \$6 billion in capital and accounts. Meanwhile, a third of the workforce was unemployed, with inflation at around 60% a month.⁷⁰ Also, while

⁶⁶ Ibid. c.717 & 720.

⁶⁷ When the Romanian authorities stopped a Serbian tanker on the Danube in late November, the Serbs retaliated by seizing six Romanian barges. *New York Times*, December 6, 1992, p.6.

⁶⁸ *Yugoslavia (Sanctions)*, op.cit c.718. See also Hurd's reply to John McFall during the same debate on the feasibility of the UN taking control of Sarajevo airport. Ibid. c.722.

⁶⁹ See Douglas Hogg, *Written Answers*, February 8, 1993. *Hansard*, Vol.218.

⁷⁰ *Guardian*, December 21, 1992, p.8.

At the EC Lisbon Summit in late June, support grew also for a WEU-led operation to break the siege of Sarajevo airport. Strong pressure for tougher action also came from France, Italy and Holland. British officials were more muted ruling out, as they put it, 'fighting our way into the airport'.⁷⁷

At this point, President Mitterand assumed the initiative and, without warning, flew direct from Lisbon to Sarajevo, upstaging his EC allies in a lone bid to break the siege. At a meeting with Bosnian President Izetbegovic, Mitterand was informed of the camps:

What is going on in our towns and villages is frightening, Muslims are grouped in squares, men separated from women and children. The women are expelled after having been raped, and innocent male civilians, unarmed, are being directed to extermination camps.⁷⁸

The information was repeated at a press conference that evening. Yet when the story reached the media headlines six weeks later, world leaders professed ignorance of the events.

According to French Minister for Humanitarian Affairs Bernard Kouchner who accompanied Mitterand on the trip, the French President based his reasons for rejecting military intervention on the advice of Fitzroy Maclean who had cautioned him on the invincibility of the Serbs.⁷⁹ Mitterand's *beau geste* did not bring about significant benefits on the ground, apart from a brief moment of euphoria. But it did place France temporarily in the forefront of international diplomacy in the Balkans, as Britain took over the EC Presidency.

⁷⁷ *Guardian*, June 27, 1992, p.1, and *Sunday Times*, June 28, 1992, p.24.

⁷⁸ KOUCHNER, Bernard, *Ce que je crois*. Grasset, Paris, 1995, p.47.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p.51. See also STONE, Norman. 'Shooting down the myth of Serbia's mighty guerillas'. *Sunday Times*, August 16, 1992, *op.cit.*

PART 2

The British EC Presidency

Britain prepared to run what it called an 'active' presidency, in contrast with its predecessor, Portugal. As Britain took over on July 1, however, Lord Carrington's peace conference came under increasingly sharp criticism.⁸⁰ Carrington's bid, during a brief stopover in Sarajevo on July 3, to recapture the international initiative in Bosnia, faltered as the ceasefire he brokered was violated within hours.⁸¹ Carrington's reputation within Bosnian government circles was articulated most colourfully by the Bosnian Vice President, Ejup Ganic:

Talks with Lord Carrington is glamour, it's like Dynasty. He introduced the terminology that is killing us. He introduced the concept of three communities...now 50,000 people dead and 1.5 million refugees.⁸²

An internal UN memo, dated July 3, described the treatment of Bosnian Muslims, including regular beatings, and deprivation of food and water.⁸³ Sent to the Bosnian ambassador in New York, and then leaked to the press, the memo raised objections from Murrack Goulding on the grounds that it was confidential and had been meant for the Red Cross, which had a mandate to protect war detainees.⁸⁴ The UN justified not

⁸⁰ One EC source likened the British attitude to that of Chamberlain. *European*, August 13-16, 1992, p.7.

⁸¹ According to Izetbegovic, Carrington advised the Bosnian president to try to negotiate with the Serbs, commenting 'It's the only way out'. On July 26, Izetbegovic wrote to Carrington that mass atrocities had taken place since their last talk, with concentration camps springing up all over Bosnia. If heavy weapons were not put under international control, the talks would 'merely be a cover for the continuation of aggression and the legalisation of the occupation of territory by the use of force and ethnic cleansing'. IZETBEGOVIC, Alija. *Inescapable Questions*, op.cit. p.248-9.

⁸² *Guardian*, July 3, 1992, p.8. The figures quoted appeared exaggerated at the time, but were later confirmed.

⁸³ *Independent*, August 7, 1992, p.1 & 8.

⁸⁴ GUEST, Iain. On Trial. *Refugee Policy Group*, September 1995, p.43. The ICRC had temporarily withdrawn from most of Bosnia, returning in early July.

interceding on the grounds that they had no mandate to monitor human rights. A later US Senate report confirmed that neither the UN or the US State Department followed the matter up which, the report concluded, amounted more to a systemic failure in both the UN and US human rights machinery than mere bureaucratic inattention. In Britain, Lady Miloska Nott, wife of a former British defence secretary, revealed that Douglas Hurd had rejected the opportunity to hear about the detention camps as early as June. Lady Nott had heard first hand accounts of atrocities against Muslims in Serb camps but, on seeking a meeting with the foreign secretary, was informed that this was not possible before the end of the month.⁸⁵

At the G7 annual summit that year, the war was singled out on the agenda as carrying considerable risks for European stability. In an attempt to re-inject life into his discredited peace conference, Lord Carrington proposed expanding it, an idea promptly quashed by the French foreign minister.⁸⁶ Germany sought outright recognition of Serbia's culpability for the onslaught but, in deference to Britain and the US, the G7 declaration shared out the blame.⁸⁷ Ruling out the use of British troops, the Foreign Secretary was reported as cautioning the more 'trigger-happy' countries that 'the achievement of political ambitions by military means is a will o' the wisp'.⁸⁸

As the international cavalcade moved from the G7 summit to the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) in Helsinki, Bosnia continued to dominate the talks. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic informed the Conference of the mass expulsions and murders carried

⁸⁵ *Observer*, August 9, 1992, p.16.

⁸⁶ WYNAENDTS, *op.cit.* p.179.

⁸⁷ *Guardian*, July 8, 1992.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

out in Serb-occupied parts of Bosnia, and that "some 80,000 troops have remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina, alone with more than 600 tanks, a huge quantity of heavy weapons ...and 50 fighter aircraft."⁸⁹ The US President met the Bosnian delegation intimating, however, that America regarded Bosnia as primarily a European issue. Following the Conference, the US ruled out ground troops, but did not exclude naval or air force.⁹⁰ More decisive military action was also supported in different degrees by France, Italy and Germany.⁹¹ France announced the deployment of five heavy Puma transport helicopters and four Gazelles. French foreign minister Roland Dumas also urged a more heavyweight forum to address the conflict, embracing the UN, to supplant Carrington's peace conference, which received support from the UN Secretary-General.⁹² US Secretary of State James Baker demanded the surrender of Serb heavy weapons handed over by the departing JNA, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. Lord Carrington took a different view, however, arguing that it was unrealistic to expect the Serbs to surrender their heavy weaponry.⁹³ Douglas Hurd confirmed from London that there was 'no appetite' for sending troops.⁹⁴ Instead, he offered 1,100 officers to Bosnia to supervise heavy weapons collections throughout the country.

⁸⁹ IZETBEGOVIC, op.cit. p.130-2.

⁹⁰ *Independent*, July 10, 1992, p.1.

⁹¹ See GLENNY, Misha. 'Yugoslavia: The Revenger's Tragedy', *New York Review*, August 13, 1992, p.43. The German constitution at this time excluded military involvement. German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel, however, pressed the EC to adopt a tougher interventionist policy towards Belgrade, denouncing his British counterpart over his "pathetic" approach to the Balkan crisis. Kinkel's sense of urgency would also have been prompted by the disproportionate refugee burden assumed by Germany. *The Times* and *Guardian*, July 23 1992, p.1.

⁹² *Independent*, July 24, 1992, p.10.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p.1.

⁹⁴ *BBC Radio 4*, *The World At One*, July 10, 1992.

Meanwhile, with the assistance of a former Conservative parliamentary candidate John Kennedy,⁹⁵ Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic conducted a publicity campaign, coinciding with the start of the British EC Presidency, where he argued that a civil war was taking place in Bosnia, and that 'premature recognition was a catalyst that sparked off the war',⁹⁶ a refrain which was subsequently taken up by many defenders of the Belgrade regime. On July 15, a press conference was held at the House of Commons, chaired by Henry Bellingham MP, then Parliamentary Private Secretary to Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, at which Karadzic presented a document entitled "Concentration Camps in the New Europe 1992". The document contained details of alleged 'concentration camp sites and detention facilities used for the imprisonment or extermination of Bosnian Serbs', and of 'ethnic cleansing' of Bosnian Serbs from Bosnia.⁹⁷ The Serbian Information Initiative later distributed the document by e-mail and other means, calling it "an appeal to the civilised world". The seed had been sown by Serb lobbyists, feeding the 'civil war' myth⁹⁸ and suggesting a symmetry of guilt, while the platform chosen - the House of Commons - lent a gloss of credibility.

On the same day, a meeting took place in London between Lord Carrington and the three Bosnian leaders where it was agreed, and later confirmed by Security Council President David Hannay, that all heavy weapons be placed under UN control. But no UN official had been invited to the meeting, or consulted. A public clash ensued between Lord Carrington and the UN Secretary-General who commented that it was "most unusual for the UN to be asked to help implement a politico-

⁹⁵ See HODGE, C. *The Serb Lobby...* op.cit. for Kennedy's lobbying efforts in Britain.

⁹⁶ *The Times*, July 1, 1992. Letters to the Editor.

⁹⁷ Even verifiable statistics were falsified, e.g. that the Serb population in Tuzla was 33% in 1991.

⁹⁸ According to one analyst, 'the conviction that this was a civil war was central to the Ministry of Defence advice on the conflict during its early months.' URBAN, Mark. *UK Eyes Alpha, The Inside Story of British Intelligence*. Faber 1997, p.213.

military agreement in whose negotiations it has played no part."⁹⁹ In a report to the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General explained that, for practical reasons, the United Nations was not able to respond to the Security Council's demand to take charge of the heavy weapons.¹⁰⁰ Lord Carrington had been publicly rebuked for acting unilaterally. His plan for the ethnic cantonisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was also under fire, some critics claiming it had given Serb forces the green light for the massive displacement of Bosnian civilians.¹⁰¹ Bosnian Serb and Croat leaders, Karadzic and Boban, on the other hand, both applauded Lord Carrington's mediation efforts, which they evidently regarded as an opportunity to legitimise territory taken by force.

Douglas Hurd, meanwhile, leaving London on July 15 for his first visit to Sarajevo, stopped off in Paris to meet the French foreign minister Roland Dumas.¹⁰² According to a French source, Hurd arrived, declaring "I am the head of Europe now. There are a couple of questions I want to discuss with you, and the first is what we do about Lord Carrington's peace conference and your proposals for a different forum".¹⁰³ Defending Carrington as a pessimist who nonetheless achieved success in the long run (Rhodesia was cited), Hurd reportedly argued for the Conference to continue.

The day after the news of the Serb concentration camps became public, an advert was placed in the New York Times, paid for by the Serb lobby

⁹⁹ *Guardian*, July 23, 1992, p.10. This was one of many instances when the UN was tasked with commitments it was not given the means to meet. A clash also occurred between the UN Secretary General and the British Ambassador to the UN, David Hannay. OWEN, David. *Balkan Odyssey*. Gollancz, 1995, p.21.

¹⁰⁰ *UN Secretary General's report to the UN Security Council*, July 21, 1992, S/24333.

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, July 4, 1992, p.16. According to the UN, three million people in former Yugoslavia had now been displaced. *Observer*, July 19, 1992, p.1.

¹⁰² *Independent*, July 18, 1992, p.10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

group, SerbNet Inc., where US leaders were urged to stay neutral in a 'civil' war, and called for the return of Cyrus Vance 'who had the respect of both sides'. It also endorsed the 'neutral' approach of Carrington.¹⁰⁴ The news of the camps prompted an international outcry for action, and exposed serious divergences amongst Western leaders, particularly between Britain and the United States, on how to respond, and in particular about how far any new UN resolution should go in promising to use 'all necessary means' to achieve peace in Bosnia. In a BBC interview Douglas Hurd acknowledged the split between Britain and the US,¹⁰⁵ but argued that the sanctions were already prompting the Serbs to open up their camps,¹⁰⁶ an argument which revealed Hurd's awareness of the influence of Belgrade on the Bosnian Serb leadership, since sanctions had not been imposed on Bosnia!

At an emergency weekend meeting at the UN Security Council, John Major withheld support for a UN resolution proposed by America on the lines of the Gulf war that had enabled allied forces to bomb Iraq.¹⁰⁷ Instead, he argued for convoys operating with the agreement of the 'warring parties' with the power to fight off attacks by 'bandits'.¹⁰⁸ The Prime Minister's terminology inferred a moral equivalence, while trivialising the facts on the ground. Later that week, Foreign Minister

¹⁰⁴ *New York Times*, August 3, 1992.

¹⁰⁵ "It will take a few days to sort out the text, we are not satellites." *Guardian*, August 10, 1992, p.1, and *Independent*, August 11, 1992, p.1.

¹⁰⁶ *Guardian*, August 10, 1992, p.8. A US Senate press release noted that the sanctions had mixed and sometimes perverse results. While slowly wearing down the economy of the federation, they did not apply to Serb-controlled regions of Bosnia. So the most culpable party in the conflict had full legal access to international markets and supplies, including oil. It was also noted that 'certain foreign governments' appeared complicit. US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Press release, August 18, 1992.

¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, Major had written to David Owen the previous week, giving as his reason for rejecting military action that 'We could not unite the international community behind such a policy'. OWEN, op.cit. p.18.

¹⁰⁸ *Sunday Times*, August 9, 1992.

Douglas Hogg returned from Sarajevo with a promise from Karadzic to consider guaranteeing the safety of relief convoys to Sarajevo,¹⁰⁹ and concluding that military intervention was unnecessary, and would prevent the UN from fulfilling its essential objectives.

By now, many senior officials in the US and EC, together with a majority of the public worldwide, supported some form of military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to a US opinion poll, this included 53% of Americans, with only 33% opposed.¹¹⁰ In the UK, just 27% of the public interviewed in an NOP poll were satisfied with the British handling of the crisis, while 61% supported sending troops as part of an international force, and 37% favoured despatching the RAF to bomb Serbian artillery positions.¹¹¹ In France, which already deployed 2,700 troops in Bosnia and Croatia, public opinion showed that 66% favoured sending in more French troops.¹¹² Also, opposition parties in France proved far more vocal critics of government policy than their British counterparts.¹¹³ General Etienne Copel, former deputy chief of staff of the French Air Force, argued for the use of helicopter gunship escorts to protect convoys:

True, they are vulnerable to ground-to-air missiles but the Serbian militia has not very sophisticated equipment and on patrol there is always another helicopter to fire back - a powerful deterrent...The logistics of an operation using both armour and helicopters to protect supply convoys would perhaps involve deployment of thousands of men but not hundreds of thousands. This limited task is in the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. August 16, 1992.

¹¹⁰ POWER, op.cit. p.276.

¹¹¹ *Independent*, August 16, 1992, p.16.

¹¹² *European*, August 13-16, 1992, p.9.

¹¹³ Gaullist leader Jacques Chirac attacked Mitterand's policy as being essentially pro-Serbian. According to Chirac, priority should have been given to a 'credible embargo' followed by air strikes to neutralise the Serb artillery. Criticism also came from Alain Lamassoure of the Union for French Democracy, and from former European parliament president Simone Veil.

power of any single middle-rank power such as the UK, France or Italy. ¹¹⁴

From Brussels, the most outspoken call yet for intervention came from European Commission President Jacques Delors who argued for military action, without limits or conditions, as the only way to curb Serbia.

It seems that without the credible perspective - I underline credible - of a military intervention, nothing will be able to stop the subtle, deadly strategy of the Serbian leadership. ¹¹⁵

During the same week, the Bosnian Serb leadership wrote to the Security Council asking for advice in order to 'avoid military intervention and the bloodshed that would accompany it'. ¹¹⁶

Differences also emerged between Britain and other NATO members. A group in the US State Department, headed by James Baker, pressed NATO to threaten air strikes at specific military targets in Serbia, with an ultimatum to Belgrade to force its surrogates in Bosnia to open the camps and allow free aid passage. ¹¹⁷ American joint chiefs of staff opposed the 'minimalist' approach favoured by British Chief of the General Staff General Sir Peter Inge, ¹¹⁸ seeking either a massive commitment, aimed at controlling all territory within 20 miles of Sarajevo airport and a 200 mile corridor from Split to Sarajevo, or none

¹¹⁴ Etienne Copel, *European*, August 13-16, 1992, p.9. For an opposing argument, see Overseas Development Secretary Lady Chalker's speech in United Nations Operations: UK Role, House of Lords, September 25, 1992, op.cit. c.595-563.

¹¹⁵ Speech to emergency hearing of the European Parliament, Brussels, reported in *Independent*, August 11, 1992, p.6.

¹¹⁶ *Guardian*, August 12, 1992.

¹¹⁷ *Sunday Times*, August 9, 1992, p.1. Planners at SHAPE, the NATO military HQ, revealed plans to commit up to 100,000 NATO forces, to seize and hold Yugoslav territory, and provide a safe corridor through which aid could flow.

¹¹⁸ *Sunday Times*, August 16, 1992, p.10.

at all. When NATO ambassadors met in Brussels, British officials sought to persuade the Pentagon that the kind of massive commitment envisaged was unnecessary, and SHAPE planners were ordered to produce some less dramatic military options.¹¹⁹ Both America and France (although not Mitterand himself) favoured air and naval cover, which was also the Bosnian government preference.¹²⁰

The international debate resulted in Security Council Resolution 770 on August 13, adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which called on states to 'take nationally or through regional agencies or arrangements all means necessary' to facilitate the UN in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo and wherever needed elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹²¹ This suited neither Britain nor the UNHCR, Britain because the term: 'all means necessary' was considered tantamount to a declaration of war on the Serbs, while the UNHCR felt its neutrality compromised by cooperation with national military forces outside the control of the UN.¹²² Meanwhile, pressure was mounting on all sides for firmer international action. In the United States, acting Yugoslav desk officer George Kenney resigned from the State Department in protest at what he saw as America's ineffective handling of the crisis.¹²³ During the same week, an extensive report by the influential US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia Herzegovina concluded that the death toll in Bosnia was far greater than previously estimated:

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ 'We think the Americans could use their sophisticated technology to silence the Serb artillery, and we can do the rest'. Bosnian government adviser, Hajrudin Somun. *Guardian*, August 12, 1992, p.6.

¹²¹ The US Senate supported the Bush Administration initiative, despite a Pentagon vote of 72/22 against the resolution. www.balkan-archive.org.yu

¹²² *Independent*, August 20, 1992.

¹²³ POWER, op.cit. p.286, and p.264-269 and p.296-300 for broader dissent within US political circles.

We believe the death toll associated with forcible removal of the Muslim village population of Bosnia and Herzegovina far exceeds the death tolls from the bombardment of cities or from killing in prison camps. Unfortunately, this most lethal aspect of ethnic cleansing has received the least amount of public attention.¹²⁴

The report also concluded that the arms embargo in no way diminished the capabilities of the well-armed Serbs.

In Britain, there were no political resignations, and little reaction from the academic community. On the other hand, a monograph by John Zametica, entitled *The Yugoslav Conflict*, published by the Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), received considerable acclaim.¹²⁵ In 1992, Zametica, a British academic of Serb origin, was a research fellow at the IISS, and later a lecturer in European security studies at Westminster University. His monograph concluded that 'there are limits to what the international community can achieve in Yugoslav-type conflicts',¹²⁶ reflecting the views of the Foreign Secretary and other British government ministers. The following year, Zametica joined the Bosnian Serbs as Karadzic's political adviser in Pale and, in 1994, threatened to down NATO planes over Bosnia.

On August 18, John Major interrupted his holiday to chair an emergency Cabinet meeting in Downing Street.¹²⁷ Four options were on

¹²⁴ The report, published on August 18, was based on a visit between 7-10 August by Senate staff members, meeting eyewitnesses and survivors, representatives of UNHCR, ICRC, the local Red Cross, humanitarian and refugee organisations, human rights activists, advisers to the new Yugoslav federal government and US mission country teams in Belgrade and Zagreb.

¹²⁵ The paper, published in the IISS Adelphi series, has now been expunged from the Institute's listing, however.

¹²⁶ *The Yugoslav Conflict*, John Zametica, Adelphi Paper 270. *Institute of International Strategic Studies*. Summer 1992, p.76. The paper received positive reviews from a number of critics, including Spyros Economides and Christopher Bellamy. *Independent*, August 20, 1992, and August 5, 1992, p.8.

¹²⁷ 'I had asked the military chiefs of staff whether the three warring factions could be kept apart, and if so, how many troops would be needed to do the job. The answer was startling: 400,000 - nearly three times the size of the whole British Army'. MAJOR, John. *The Autobiography*.

the table, ranging from the deployment of 1,000-2,000 troops to escort aid convoys, to the use of 100,000-300,000 troops, to secure corridors to allow convoys to pass. The minimalist approach was chosen. Major notes in his autobiography that there was no clear consensus for an alternative policy, either in the Commons or in the country, and that 'at no point did the opposition call for a division on the issue of Bosnia.'¹²⁸ Two items had been tabled for the Cabinet to discuss: Iraq and Bosnia. The following day, media headlines announced UK action in both countries: an air exclusion zone in Southern Iraq, and the despatch of 1,800 soldiers to protect UN aid convoys in Bosnia. This dual announcement might have lent the impression that Britain was taking resolute action against human rights miscreants on a global scale. As it was, action on Iraq (no more or less urgent than earlier) masked *inaction* on Bosnia. The UN had not been consulted before the decision. Ministers discussed Iraq only during the first half hour of a six-hour session, with the rest of the time devoted to Bosnia. To obviate any misunderstanding, the Prime Minister gave the assurance that the troops would not be required 'to fight to Armageddon and back ... There are no heroes and no villains - just a lot of fighting and a lot of people losing their lives'. The following day, *The Times* printed an extended letter from Radovan Karadzic, playing on the 'ancient ethnic hatreds' myth, referring to 'centuries of spilled blood', and to the alleged invincibility of the Serb military: 'an area which has broken all who have gone before'. The editorial quoted from Karadzic's letter, opining that Serbia had 'all but won'.¹²⁹

HarperCollins, 1999, p.535. Jonathan Eyal of the Royal United Services Institute opined that 'hundreds of thousands of soldiers on the ground' would be needed. *Guardian*, Comment page, August 13, 1992.

¹²⁸ MAJOR, *Ibid.* p.536. The House of Commons had not been recalled to debate the issue, while national opinion polls contradicted the prime minister's statement.

¹²⁹ *The Times*, August 19, 1992, p.11.

On September 14, UNSCR 770 was followed by UNSCR 776, which recommended the expansion of the UNPROFOR mandate in Bosnia to provide armed escort for UNHCR humanitarian convoys, paid for by the contributing states. No reference was made to Chapter VII of the Charter, authorising "all necessary means". The UN resolution had been diluted, rejecting the use of force in any of the forms proposed by France, the United States and other countries. It accorded, however, with the decision made at the emergency Downing Street Cabinet meeting, and was endorsed through the London Conference.

The London Conference

The British-hosted international peace conference, held in London on 26-27 August, resolved several problems. It eclipsed the French initiatives; it deflected criticism of Carrington's failed Conference; it mollified the UN Secretary General, who co-chaired the Conference, in incorporating the UN officially into the political decision-making process; it stilled the voices for intervention coming from the US, Islamic countries and some parts of Europe; and it reasserted Britain's role. As Lord Carrington bowed out, another former British foreign secretary and lord, David Owen, took his place, personally appointed by John Major who ignored disgruntlement in Europe over Britain's virtual monopoly of proceedings and players,¹³⁰ while Peter Hall, Britain's ambassador in Belgrade, was appointed as Owen's deputy secretary.

The London Conference also simultaneously shifted the political spotlight and responsibility from London to the UN in Geneva where the

¹³⁰ According to David Owen, his appointment was arranged between British ministers and government officials and Cyrus Vance during the week of August 11-17. OWEN, *op.cit.* p.21-23. Owen was a useful choice from the British standpoint. An experienced politician, with proven negotiating skills, titled and tough, but also without party allegiances, Owen had publicly criticised British policy, advocating air strikes, but was now neutralised, Douglas Hurd requiring him to 'discuss a form of words to cover his previous statements about the use of air power...' OWEN *Ibid.* p.24.

permanent conference - the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) - was to be based. Geneva was remote and respectable, but it was also a slow-grinding bureaucracy. For those who were anxious to maintain the so-called 'evenhanded' policy (which, by virtue of the blanket arms embargo, implied the eventual supremacy of the Serbs) the Geneva Conference was a welcome development.

The arrangement also suited America. As with other nations, it allowed space for US involvement without accountability, the United Nations umbrella shielding members from individual responsibility. It was of particular advantage to George Bush, in the run up to the US presidential elections, while the United Nations itself could claim that, in the final count, it was no more than the sum total of its member states, and therefore could act only within the mandate handed down through the Security Council within which, in turn, members could shift blame for perceived wrong decisions, and prevaricate on the difficult ones.

The London Conference, therefore, notwithstanding the 'principles' drafted by its British hosts, served to blur the contours of international responsibility in resolving the conflict, at the same time setting the framework for the various tensions which were to recur between states, and between and within international institutions throughout the war. The clashes between the UN and NATO, the erosion of public credibility in the United Nations, the deepening rift between the United States and Britain, and the antagonisms within, and ignominy endured by, a European 'Union' which had failed to subdue a European war, were factors arising, in great part, out of the contradictions inherent in the London Conference.

The London Conference laid down a groundwork of basic rules, but did not indicate the penalties for not adhering to them. No punishment was proposed for crimes already committed (apart from the longer term proposal for a war crimes tribunal), and there was no threat, beyond

verbal censure, for potential future crimes. The message from London to the Serb leaders, in other words, was that they could continue much as before, with relative impunity. The London Conference had offered Milosevic more room for manoeuvre than he had anticipated. Tougher sanctions were vaguely proposed, but without any details worked out; UN monitors were to be posted on the Serbian-Bosnian border, but two years later had still not arrived; and there was no pressure to restore autonomous status to Kosovo or Vojvodina. The Conference statement called for the 'return of territories taken by force' with 'just and adequate arrangements' for those expelled from their homes. But Karadzic's instant rejoinder, to offer mortgages for dispossessed Muslims, made a mockery of the whole proceedings. The status of Macedonia remained unresolved and, although there was a 96-hour deadline for Karadzic to place his heavy artillery under UN guard, no-one was able to say when the 96 hours should begin. In fact, it never did. Most important of all, the threat of western military intervention had once again been deferred.

Milosevic's mood at a rare interview on the final evening before returning to Belgrade was indicative of the perceived Serb victory. Described as being in a relaxed mood, sipping a whisky, 'he joked and exuded bonhomie'.¹³¹ Although Serbia had been warned that it risked total economic, cultural, political and diplomatic isolation, Milosevic informed the interviewer that he was not planning to change his policies. When asked whether he feared that this could lead to increased tension, or worse, between Serbia and the rest of the world, Milosevic replied: "No, I don't believe so. I believe that they will clarify their picture of Serbia."

A comment by Henri Wynaendts, Head of the EC Monitoring Mission in former Yugoslavia, perhaps best summed up the Conference:

¹³¹ *Independent*, August 31, 1992.

I had the feeling we were to be going through the negotiations of the previous year. Promises not kept and in the meantime the carnage would continue. I had a very sad feeling that day.¹³²

Sequel to the Conference

The immediate aftermath of the Conference was marked by an upsurge in artillery and mortar fire throughout Bosnia. Front page headlines told the tale: 'Slaughter in the marketplace'¹³³, 'Mortar blasts London peace hopes'.¹³⁴ Within two days of the Conference, 34 civilians were killed and 130 injured¹³⁵ and, within weeks, Jajce, a town of some 45,000 people, 80% of them non-Serb, fell to VRS forces, following sustained aerial bombardment.¹³⁶

In Belgrade, the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Dobrica Cosic, applauded the decision to institute a standing peace conference in Geneva, proposing the demilitarisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the creation of a Balkan confederation. In an article drawing a symmetry of guilt, Cosic also called for "international factors of the Yugoslav crisis [to] overcome their role of biased arbitrators and establish the equality of all the Yugoslav participants".¹³⁷ Delegate Milos Dromnjak also praised the London Conference, naming Serbia's perceived friends and foes on the international scene. "The "cynical

¹³²Henry Wynaendts, quoted in GOWING, Nik. 'Diplomacy & Deceit'. *Channel .*, Bloody Bosnia Week. August 1, 1993. A similar sentiment was expressed by Wynaendts at a meeting with this author (Paris, February 1996).

¹³³ *The Times*, August 31, 1992, p.1

¹³⁴ *Independent*, August 31, 1992, p.1.

¹³⁵ *Guardian*, August 27, 1992, p.1.

¹³⁶ Jajce (19% Serb in 1991) was crucial to the Serbs, its two hydro-electric plants supplying the Serb capital, Banja Luka. Lord Owen, Evidence before the Select Committee for Foreign Affairs, December 10, 1992, 165.

¹³⁷ *Review of International Affairs*, Vol.XLIII, 1007-8, 1 August/1September 1992, p.1-2.

group", as Dromnjak termed it, consisted of Albania, Austria, Germany, Holland and to some extent Hungary, Turkey and partly Belgium. The other moderate and more rational group that set the tone to the entire Conference consisted of the representatives of Russia, France, China and in great measure of the United Kingdom and Romania...'¹³⁸

On November 27-28, a 'scientific symposium' was held in Belgrade, entitled World and the Yugoslav Crisis,[sic] where the London Conference and other themes were discussed, including external attitudes to the war, the question of the continuity of the FRY, and conditions for the lifting of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. Of particular note was the speech delivered by the 'Yugoslav' foreign minister, Ilija Djukic, not only for his conclusions on the London Conference, but for the relevance of his comments to later developments between Serbia and the international community, in particular the UN Security Council. Djukic paid tribute to the London Conference, in which he felt Serbia's performance was impressive, as an attempt by the international community to help Serbia emerge from its 'difficult situation'. He expressed relief that the federation, albeit reduced in size, had been, as he saw it, *de facto* recognised by the international community, pointing out that "no serious politician, no representative of serious countries playing a key role today in settling the fate of Europe and our own fate...has questioned our new borders. Or Kosovo, our sore point..."¹³⁹ Djukic stressed that Serbia should nurture its friends and allies in the world, and look to the UN for 'support and understanding... We are in the right and we should wait for the realization to sink in that Yugoslavia belongs to the international community... Even more vitally important is the question of sanctions. We must get them lifted. The

¹³⁸ Ibid. p.5-6. Three Permanent Members of the UN Security Council were, according to this perception, considered Serbia's allies, with a fourth, Britain, as a qualified ally. The qualifications regarding the UK may have been a reflection of Britain's ambivalent role (in *Cetnik* terms) in World War II, when Churchill transferred allied support to Tito's partisans from the Cetnik leader, Draza Mihailovic. Mihailovic was rehabilitated in the early 1990s.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 1009-11, 1 October/1 December 1992, p.1-3.

United Nations must do its bit'.¹⁴⁰ He referred to the principles in the UN Charter and their value in the 'birth of the new world order', but also of the necessity 'to bring the Charter up to date...In this process, Yugoslavia will take an active part...We hold the central position in the Balkans. There is a possibility for us to become the centre of gravity for European movement in the Balkan area'.¹⁴¹

The partial rehabilitation of Serbia and Montenegro was principally due to the support of Britain, France and Russia. Without making any tangible concessions, the Belgrade regime managed to have sanctions eased and, imperceptibly, to manoeuvre Serbia into a central position in the Balkans to the point where, until early 1999, Milosevic was mostly viewed as the main regional peace broker.¹⁴² In view of its continuing role in Bosnia's war, Serbia's partial readmission into the international community at this time was a considerable achievement.

UNPROFOR deployment to Bosnia

On September 14, UN Security Council Resolution 776 approved the expansion of UNPROFOR by up to 6,000 troops, including 1,800 from Britain. The concept of "protective support" - the term used for the UN mandate to protect humanitarian aid deliveries - was a British initiative which, as Head of the Foreign Office UN Department Glynne Evans put it, 'we then sold to some of our closest friends and allies'.¹⁴³ Nonetheless,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See ROBINSON, Edward. 'Managing Milosevic's Serbia'. Discussion Paper 54, *Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA)*, 1995. Robinson, Attache at the British embassy in Belgrade, 1992-1994, and later Visiting Fellow at the RIIA, argued in the paper for 'a concerted and forward-looking policy towards Serbia'.

¹⁴³ DUDLEY EDWARDS, Ruth. *True Brits: Inside the Foreign Office*, p.55. John Major also confirmed this in a statement to the House of Commons, European Council (Birmingham), October 20, 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.212, c.320.

although despatched under a 'humanitarian' mandate, the decision was not taken on humanitarian or defence grounds. As Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind pointed out:

The decision to send soldiers to the former Yugoslavia was not a decision taken by the Ministry of Defence alone on purely defence grounds: it was taken by the Government with regard to its overall foreign policy interests and objectives.¹⁴⁴

Deployment of British troops into a war zone was effected without reference to the House of Commons, however, where it was debated *post factum* at a hard-fought-for adjournment debate on September 25.¹⁴⁵ It was a 'minimalist' decision, which maintained Britain in the forefront of international diplomacy, while deflecting from growing calls for full-scale military intervention.

The lack of groundwork preparation was evident from the beginning. Commander of the first British UNPROFOR mission to Bosnia, Bob Stewart, following his briefing at the Ministry of Defence the same week, summed up some of the concerns expressed by MPs during the debate:

The whole business was still a long way from being put together properly. Not only was it unclear where we could operate but command and control arrangements as well as Rules of Engagement were still in nascent form.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Secretary of State for Defence Malcolm Rifkind, Select Committee for Defence. October 29, 1992, para.594.

¹⁴⁵ Parliament was recalled at the request of Labour leader, John Smith. An earlier request by senior Labour MPs Clare Short, Dawn Primarolo and Tony Banks to debate the issue was refused. John Cunningham voiced the Labour Party's view. 'I believe that Parliament should have been recalled some weeks ago to discuss...in particular, the decision to deploy British troops. Some important questions need clarification...there have been, I believe, 17 occasions since 1939 when the House has been recalled to discuss emergencies or crises of one kind or another and...8 of those occasions have involved foreign affairs. It was remiss of the Government to postpone, or at first, to reject the request...for the recall of Parliament before now'. United Nations Operations, *Hansard*, op.cit. c.134-5.

¹⁴⁶ STEWART, Bob. *Broken Lives*. Harper Collins, 1993, p.23. The Foreign Secretary gave a different impression of the army's preparedness for the Bosnia mission, claiming that "the British Government should never deploy British troops without careful preparation and assessment of what their role and objectives should be". Douglas Hurd, United Nations Operations, *Ibid*. c.119.

In all essential respects the UNPROFOR mission failed, but the presence of UN ground troops was to provide an effective pretext for opposing air strikes and maintaining the arms embargo. UK and other troops were not only compromised by the lack of an explicit mandate, but the deployment of lightly-armed non-combat forces under UN auspices was later to thwart the international peace process, as hundreds of troops fell hostage to the VRS forces, and to discredit the UN which had failed to protect the civilian population in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Also, while the presence of troops facilitated delivery of humanitarian aid in some areas, UNPROFOR had limited access in others, including the eastern Bosnian enclaves where aid was most needed. Equally, the operation depended 'on the goodwill of the combatants'¹⁴⁷ which meant that Bosnian Serb General Mladic's forces, which controlled most of the communications lines, also controlled most of the aid distribution so that, as with the arms embargo, the policy advantaged the Pale regime, often at the expense of the victims.

The Adjournment debate of 25 September was the first Commons debate since the summer recess, and the first on Bosnia in six months of conflict. It included developments in Iraq and Somalia, as well as an update on the UNPROFOR operation in Croatia. The Foreign Secretary spent the first ten minutes of his statement discoursing on the historical background to the war which, he opined, had its roots in centuries past.¹⁴⁸ He did not announce the British troop deployment until some fifteen minutes into his speech, discouraging debate on the escalating crisis in Bosnia.

¹⁴⁷ The Prime Minister, Oral Questions, 20 October 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.212, c.332.

¹⁴⁸ '12 million people with very different histories were mingled inextricably in the north-west of the Balkans'. Douglas Hurd, United Nations Operations, op.cit. c.130.

I do not need to tell the House how the storm then shifted to Bosnia. I shall not go into it, because we and our constituents have seen, night by night, that storm blow up into tragedy throughout the summer.¹⁴⁹

Judging from the questions, however, this was just the information MPs required, especially in light of Britain's leading role both through the peace conference and the British EC presidency. Describing the war as a 'storm', moreover, tended to neutralise events, conveying the impression of uncontrollable turmoil, as opposed to a pre-planned, systematic military offensive on the civilian population.

As earlier, Douglas Hurd identified the Serbs as carrying the main responsibility for both starting and continuing the war, but continued to discourage any discussion on military intervention:

It is natural that people watching the atrocities on television, seeing the bombardment of Sarajevo and the emaciated figures emerging from the camps, should urge military action by air or land against those responsible. Personally, I felt and said that such action would have been morally justified if it could have been effective in bringing those atrocities to an end. Air strikes were the option most often put forward, and we and others considered that suggestion more than once. However, given the terrain, the weapons being used for most of the killing - which were not heavy weapons - the way in which the civilians and military...live side by side and the likelihood that such military action would immediately bring to an end the humanitarian activities of the Red Cross and United Nations agencies, we and our allies and partners have come down against that option each time it has been considered.¹⁵⁰

This was not strictly accurate. The air strikes option was discarded mainly due to a lack of consensus, Britain having consistently opposed it, even to the point of excluding it from the agenda of the August 18 emergency Cabinet meeting. Neither was the argument that air strikes would bring aid delivery to a halt a main concern of the Bosnian

¹⁴⁹ Douglas Hurd, *Ibid.* c.120.

¹⁵⁰ Douglas Hurd, *Ibid.* c.123.

government, whose stated priority throughout the war was for the removal of the arms embargo.¹⁵¹ Douglas Hurd's comment on the embargo, that 'there is an arms embargo against all the republics'¹⁵² was an interesting one, since Bosnia-Herzegovina was no longer a republic but a sovereign state! Either this was a slip of the tongue, or the Foreign Secretary chose his words circumspectly. Referring to the no-fly zone over Bosnia, agreed at the London Conference, Hurd proposed enforcement by 'monitors on the ground, although this was considered an insufficient deterrent by most other major western powers. The foreign secretary concluded his speech by reference to the 'ancient hatreds' myth. 'Once old hatreds have been aroused, they are hard to put to sleep again',¹⁵³ and by confirming that '[n]either we nor the CSCE nor the UN yet have the aptitude or the powers to sort out problems within central or eastern European countries...'¹⁵⁴ The suggestion of collective international impotence to stem the Serb assault on Bosnia was tantamount to offering *carte blanche* to the Serb forces to pursue their military strategy with impunity, a position questioned even by some Conservative MPs.¹⁵⁵ Newly-appointed Labour spokesman for foreign affairs, John Cunningham, addressing the Commons for the first time on Bosnia, admitted he had much to learn.¹⁵⁶ Cunningham endorsed government policy in deploying British troops, and ruling out the military option. Overall, Belgrade would have been reassured that

¹⁵¹ According to former UK ambassador to the UN, Anthony Parsons: 'Having made it impossible for the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina to acquire the arms needed to defend itself, the UN owed it to the government to do more than mediate and engage in non-threatening peacekeeping... The high technology weaponry and delivery systems were there for both contingencies without putting troops on the ground: by the time UNPROFOR was deployed throughout Bosnia it was too late.' PARSONS, *op.cit.* p.232.

¹⁵² United Nations Operations, *op.cit.* c.121.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* c.125.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* c.126.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Colvin, *Ibid.* c.123 and Michael Lord, *Ibid.* c.125.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* c.131.

the Labour Opposition continued to present little challenge to government policy.

More than twenty backbenchers spoke, the majority expressing serious concerns as to the viability of the mission. The government was in turn accused of incompetence and prevarication,¹⁵⁷ inconsistency of approach¹⁵⁸ and a lack of adaptability and co-ordination. One speaker claimed that the decision to send British forces to Bosnia was merely a sop to placate public opinion, pointing out that it was humiliating for forces to have to argue their way through warlords' domains.¹⁵⁹ Another felt that the UN mandate was treating the symptoms not the cause, allowing the situation to fester.¹⁶⁰ Secretary of State for Defence Malcolm Rifkind, in his closing speech, did not address the main concerns raised, and had little to say about the command structure or rules of engagement either then or the following month in his evidence before the Defence Select Committee, by which time a further 600 British troops had been deployed to Bosnia.¹⁶¹

The House of Lords held a parallel debate on the issue that day, in which Members' views, as in the House of Commons, did not fall within the traditional party political divisions, and where (reflecting the House of Commons debate on March 5) a number of speakers who claimed personal knowledge of the area - mostly acquired during World War II - took a view which reflected the Serb position.¹⁶² Interestingly, Overseas

¹⁵⁷ Ernie Ross, *Ibid.* c.156.

¹⁵⁸ Ieuan Wyn Jones, *Ibid.* c.169.

¹⁵⁹ Bruce George, *Ibid.* c.164.

¹⁶⁰ Jacques Arnold, *Ibid.* c.175.

¹⁶¹ The Defence Secretary stipulated, however, that "it will be no part of the role of our forces to seek to fight their way through to their destination," Minutes of evidence taken before the Defence Select Committee, October 29, 1992. para.551.

¹⁶² Lord Merlyn-Rees advised against British intervention, and deplored Croatia's 'premature' recognition. United Nations Operations: UK Role, op.cit. c.551-554; Lord Chalfont spoke of 'a

Development Secretary Linda Chalker warned Bosnians and Croats against forming a defence pact.

I would regard that as very serious indeed, certainly if there are plans for the further use of force...I hope they will desist immediately from all provocative military movements...further violence will increasingly alienate any foreign sympathy which they still enjoy.¹⁶³

In view of the conditions on the ground, this could have been interpreted as advice to succumb to Serb aggression. It also echoed the advice given by Lord Carrington to the Bosnian president some weeks previously.

The timing of the troop deployment is pivotal to an understanding of British policy in Bosnia. The decision was made at a time when public outrage, following the discovery of the Serb concentration camps, was at its peak. The introduction of British and other UN troops into Bosnia to escort UN aid deliveries, lightly armed,¹⁶⁴ in small numbers, and under a limited and unclear mandate, responded to the 'something must be done' lobby, but it did not contribute to reducing hostilities. Placed in vulnerable, often humiliating, situations in the middle of a war zone, the troops were potential (and, later actual) political hostages, where their presence was used as a pretext for blocking other means of ending the war.

nightmare terrain for any military commander', *Ibid.* c.556; and the Earl of Lauderdale, with 'some knowledge of the lingo', cautioned against 'bludgeoning of the Serbs' with sanctions, *Ibid.* c.559.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* c.591.

¹⁶⁴ 'There will be no tanks, artillery or combat air support. That would profoundly alter the essence of the operation.' Armed Forces Minister Archie Hamilton, Former Yugoslavia, November 16, 1992. *Hansard*, Vol.214, c.82.

House of Commons: November, 1992

Following the deployment of British troops to Bosnia, a number of issues were raised by Members of Parliament relating to government policy. An adjournment debate dedicated to former Yugoslavia was called in mid-November by the Liberal Democrats. It was the only Commons debate with a division during the Bosnian war. The motion "...That this House regrets that the response of the European Community and notably Her Majesty's Government, since it has assumed the Presidency, to the crisis in former Yugoslavia has been too little and too late..." was overturned by the Minister for the Armed Forces, Archie Hamilton.¹⁶⁵ Most Labour MPs, including the Shadow Front Bench, boycotted the debate, allegedly in a quid pro quo for not receiving Liberal Democrat support in an earlier debate on pit closures.¹⁶⁶ During the debate, thirteen MPs from four different parties, including two Conservatives, made specific criticisms of various aspects of British government policy in Bosnia. In a brief summing up, Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg addressed few of these points. There was one aspect of the UNPROFOR mission on which both he and the Minister for the Armed Forces, Archie Hamilton, were unequivocal:

We are not in the business of going to war with the Serbs...
If the troops cannot get an agreement from the warring factions, they will not start out in the first place...¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵The Conservative minister moved that the House "congratulates the European Community and notably Her Majesty's Government in its capacity as Presidency on its unremitting work for a solution of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia..." [Archie Hamilton, *Ibid.*] Archie Hamilton resigned from office the following year. "The aid that we have given to Bosnia may have prolonged the conflict and more people may have died than would have done so if we had had nothing whatever to do with it. We must face the agonising and difficult issue that throughout the conflict we have been feeding the warring factions in Bosnia."

¹⁶⁶ Information from George Galloway, MP, Glasgow Labour Party Constituency Office, December 5, 1992.

¹⁶⁷ Archie Hamilton, *Ibid.* c.79 and 82.

We are not in the business of fighting through obstacles. We are in the business of negotiating passage. Anything else is bound to fail because it will run to a war.¹⁶⁸

In the view of a former British ambassador to the UN, Anthony Parsons, however,

UNPROFOR had been deployed as a traditional peacekeeping force with blue helmets in white painted vehicles, without supporting artillery, nor significant heavy armour, nor close air support. This with the non enforcement of the NFZ amounted to a message to the aggressors that the UN, i.e. the major west European and other NATO powers, with the most awesome military force at their disposal, were not prepared to engage in combat, even to convey aid. This meant General Mladic and, to a lesser extent, Bosnian Croat forces, had a free hand to continue ethnic cleansing.¹⁶⁹

The debate aired many concerns raised elsewhere in parliament, including Britain's refugee policy, the no-fly zone and the implementation of UN sanctions. These are considered below.

The refugee crisis

[this House]...insists that Her Majesty's Government must respond much more generously to the refugee problem, both financially and in the numbers accepted [and] calls on Her Majesty's Government to co-ordinate a European Community wide strategy for refugees as proposed by Germany and for further urgent and appropriate action...¹⁷⁰

At this time, there was no coordinated European policy to address the refugee crisis. While Germany and other European countries admitted large numbers of Bosnians in 1992, the United Kingdom became

¹⁶⁸ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c.111.

¹⁶⁹ PARSONS, *op.cit.* p.232.

¹⁷⁰ Former Yugoslavia, November 16, 1992. *op.cit.* c.72.

distinguished as the only country which had actually deported Bosnian asylum-seekers.¹⁷¹

Confronted at the House of Commons with criticism of the government's refugee policy, the Armed Forces Minister pointed out that "since the conflict began in Yugoslavia, more than 40,000 Yugoslav nationals have arrived in this country already,"¹⁷² a figure which was grossly misleading, and conflicted with Home Office information indicating that 90% of the arrivals were visitors and students.¹⁷³ By mid-November, there were an estimated 2.5 million refugees and displaced people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, just over four thousand of them in Britain.¹⁷⁴

On November 6, the British government introduced new visa restrictions which precluded Bosnians from applying within Bosnia, where there was no British embassy. Over 180 Bosnian refugees, predominantly women and children, who had applied for visas to visit the United Kingdom, were held at the Slovenian/Austrian border.¹⁷⁵ The government later decided that only six of the refugees with family ties in the UK should be granted visas.¹⁷⁶ The rest of the group were refused visas to the UK and, after an extended diplomatic wrangle, were offered asylum in Austria. The event caused a furore in the House of Commons, where no minister was able to clarify the issue. Two weeks later, junior Home Office minister Charles Wardle made a statement in the House, announcing

¹⁷¹ Under the Dublin Convention, any EC member could return a refugee to the country of first entry. Accordingly, in July, 36 refugees were returned from Britain to Germany and Belgium *The New Republic*, September 21, 1992, p.29.

¹⁷² Archie Hamilton. Former Yugoslavia, November 16, 1992. op.cit. c.76.

¹⁷³ According to Home Office Minister Charles Wardle, 'total admissions [were] 33,200, of whom visitors 21,900, students 1,680, spouses, fiances, children 50, others [mainly passengers returning and transit passengers] 9,540...persons applying for asylum at UK ports 930'. Written Answers, October 23, 1992, *Hansard*, Vol.212.

¹⁷⁴ *The Times*, November 18, 1992, p.2.

¹⁷⁵ *Channel 4 News*, November 13, 1992.

¹⁷⁶ Archie Hamilton, Former Yugoslavia, op.cit. c.77.

that, in addition to the first group of 150 former detainees from camps in Bosnia, the government were now willing to receive up to 1,000 former detainees, together with a maximum of 3,000 dependents.¹⁷⁷ He added that the selection of the ex-detainees would be a matter for the UNHCR, together with the ICRC.¹⁷⁸ What he did not say was that each application submitted by the UNHCR would be considered by the Home Office on a case-by-case basis, causing interminable delays. Most of the 1,000 quota for ex-detainees had still not been used by 1995.¹⁷⁹

The reluctance to admit Bosnian refugees to Britain was in part a reflection of Britain's overall immigration policy, then widely acknowledged as amongst the most stringent in Europe. A significant number of those arriving before the visa restrictions were introduced were from Serbia and Serb-held territory in Bosnia, who had easier access via Belgrade.¹⁸⁰ Some were draft-dodgers, others 'economic' migrants, often with fairly fluent English, unlike the majority of Bosnian Muslims who had been forcibly displaced. Discrimination also occurred in local housing policy, and interpreting presented a particular problem. Bosnians, offered exclusively Serb interpreters for highly sensitive interviews with Home Office officials attempted to object, but mostly without success. There were more Serbs in Britain available to interpret. On the other hand, opportunities to use non-Serbs were often not taken up.¹⁸¹ The policy that 'refugees should be looked after as close

¹⁷⁷ *Bosnian Refugees*, November 30, 1992. *Hansard*, Vol.215, c.30.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* c.31.

¹⁷⁹ From the 1,000 quota offered, only 387 ex-detainees, plus 1,001 dependents had been admitted to Britain. *UN Information Notes*, June 1995, p.21. The only two other European countries with a higher remaining quota of ex-detainees were Germany and Switzerland which had by late 1992 already accepted 235,000 and 70,450 refugees respectively. *The Times*, November 18, 1992, p.2.

¹⁸⁰ The Bosnian Serbs had declared that no more than 5% of non-Serb ethnic groups would be permitted to remain in any municipality in Serb-occupied territory.

¹⁸¹ On occasion, Serb interpreters were allocated even in areas where non-Serbs were available. In Glasgow, for instance, over a hundred refugees who had been expelled from northern Bosnia by

to their homes as possible'¹⁸² and that 'our troops will try to remove people from the areas where their lives are most threatened to areas which are relatively safer'¹⁸³ was crucial for the British government, since the creation of a significant refugee problem affecting the wider community would automatically internationalise the issue, and provide grounds for military intervention.¹⁸⁴

War crimes

In late 1992, a number of reports from the US State Department, UN Human Rights Rapporteur Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Medecins sans Frontieres, Medecins du Monde, and others, documenting the widespread and serious abuse of human rights in Bosnia, and the later Warburton Report alleging some 20,000 cases of rape, reactivated the London Conference decision for a commission to investigate war crimes in former Yugoslavia. From the outset, however, Britain placed obstacles in the way of the commission, in relation to funding, field investigation, collection and handing over of testimonies, the chairing of the commission, and even the name.¹⁸⁵ The US State Department had wanted the commission referred to as a 'war crimes commission' to link with the 1943 UN War Crimes Commission, established to prepare for

Serb forces were only offered Serbian interpreters in their debriefing interviews with the Home Office, where explicit details of their home situation, background and capture, were interpreted by Serbs, at least one of whom had links with the Belgrade regime. Non-Serbs who offered to interpret (some on a voluntary basis) including, in one case, a qualified court interpreter, were rejected.

¹⁸² Douglas Hurd, United Nations Operations, 25 September 1992. op.cit. c.124.

¹⁸³ Archie Hamilton, Former Yugoslavia, 16 November 1992. op.cit. c.84. This was also supported by the International Red Cross.

¹⁸⁴ See HIGGINS, Professor Rosalyn, Q.C. Evidence before Foreign Affairs Committee, *Hansard*, February 17, 1993, 392-3.

¹⁸⁵ For another account corroborating the British and French reluctance to support the Commission of Experts see SCHARF, Michael P. *Balkan Justice*, Carolina Academic Press, 1997, pp.40-42, 52 & 75-77.

the Nuremberg prosecutions. Britain opposed this title, resulting in the compromise title of 'Commission of Experts', with no reference to war crimes. Britain also argued that funding for the Commission should be from existing sources. When a trust fund was later established to enable the Commission to conduct investigations, Britain was not amongst the thirteen contributing countries (which included the United States, Canada, Norway and Holland),¹⁸⁶ nor did it offer help in kind,¹⁸⁷ claiming to be too 'over-extended' to offer logistical and security support for exhumations.¹⁸⁸

The US and Britain had an entirely different concept of how the Commission should work, the US envisaging a pro-active investigation, while the British preference was for a more passive group which would analyse information submitted to it.¹⁸⁹ In early 1993, former camp detainees granted asylum in Britain were extensively interviewed at a British military base in Kent, where they offered first-hand, substantiated information. A Foreign Office file obtained by the BBC, however, claimed that the goal of the exercise was military intelligence. By July 1993, the British government had handed over just one sample affidavit. It was only immediately prior to an interview given by Commission Chair Cherif Bassiouni to the BBC for a Panorama programme that the government was prompted to produce a further batch of affidavits.¹⁹⁰ There was also a uneasy relationship between the Commission and UNPROFOR, which had blocked the Commission's

¹⁸⁶ *Final report of the Commission of Experts*, UN document S/1994/674, May 27, 1994, ref.4.

¹⁸⁷ These included the United States, Canada, Norway and Holland. See GUEST, *op.cit.* p.64.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p.68.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.61.

¹⁹⁰ *Getting Away with Murder*, *BBC Panorama*, December 13, 1993. It was reported that when Britain handed over the EC Presidency chair to Denmark at the end of 1992, many files covering the first crucial period of ethnic cleansing were taken back to London. GUEST. *op.cit.* p.66.

travel to the region for several months until March 1993, on security grounds.¹⁹¹

One comprehensive study of the work of the Commission of Experts concluded that it was

consistently denied the kind of support that it required. Everything was harder than it should have been - acquiring information, launching investigations, securing funding...from the UN Secretary-General on down, [the UN] simply failed to exploit the Commission's potential as an independent enquiry...Britain's opposition was most notable.¹⁹²

Perhaps the most revealing statement of the British government position on prosecuting perpetrators of war crimes in former Yugoslavia came from Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg:

We assert and will continue to assert, that those who commit such crimes, either directly or indirectly, should be held personally accountable. However, there is another problem...If the authority - the responsibility for those crimes goes as high as the hon. Gentleman and I expect, we must ask ourselves what is the priority; is it to bring people to trial or is it to make peace? This is the sort of tension with which we must deal.¹⁹³

This was as far as any British minister came to acknowledging that the international community was conducting peace negotiations with war criminals, which a war crimes tribunal might risk exposing.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p.58.

¹⁹² Ibid. p.94-5. There was one notable exception to this. the UN Human Rights Rapporteur, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, had coordinated closely with the Commission, realizing the importance of exposing war crimes, both as a deterrent and as part of the healing process. But Mazowiecki, too, experienced difficulties with the UN in attempting to fulfil his mandate, and eventually resigned after the Srebrenica massacre in 1995.

¹⁹³ Douglas Hogg, Oral Questions, February 10, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.218.

The following year, just months into office, the Chairman of the UN Commission of Experts resigned from his post because, he claimed, frustration at the UN bureaucracy and obstruction by Western governments had harmed his health.¹⁹⁴

The No-fly zone

UN Security Council Resolution 781 on 9 October 1992 imposed an air exclusion zone over Bosnia but without authorisation for its enforcement.¹⁹⁵ When Jajce fell to VRS forces, who openly defied the no-fly zone in towns in central and northern Bosnia, the question of international military intervention again arose, especially in America.¹⁹⁶ This was temporarily deflected by the British government and Russia.¹⁹⁷ Britain's views on interdicting air space over former Yugoslavia were clearly on record a year earlier, and had not changed.

¹⁹⁴ 'The Commission did not have the full political support of major governments', Fritz Kalshoven. Reuters report, October 1, 1993. *International Human Rights Institute Collection (IHRLI) Sarajevo Source File*. Open Society Archives, October 1993.

¹⁹⁵ Owen claims he forged an agreement with Radovan Karadzic at that time to respect the NFZ ban, but would not have been able to do so without the warning by President Bush days earlier that the US was prepared to enforce the ban in the case of infringement. *Foreign Affairs Committee*, December 10, 1992. No.168.

¹⁹⁶ *The Times*, November 25, 1992. A Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff report stated the only hope for ending conflict was large-scale UN military intervention. *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov 26 1992, A14. According to UN sources, the US was ready to act if the Balkans 'blew up'. *Sunday Times*, November 29, 1992. David Gompert (US Security Council 1990-93) observed that 'history might have taken a different course if the day after we had insisted that all the terms of the London Conference be upheld...we felt even then that the use of force to enforce the terms of the London Conference was probably essential. That was the only thing the Serbs would respect.' *Channel 4, Bloody Bosnia Week*, August 1, 1993.

¹⁹⁷ In the view of Colonel Michael Dewar, Deputy Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 'military intervention is perfectly feasible from a military point of view... Douglas Hurd and others for entirely political reasons are fighting shy of saying that it is viable. What they mean is that they do not think it is politically desirable'. *Guardian*, Comment, October 23, 1992. See also 'Intervencija u BiH ne bi zaustavila rat', *Borba*, November 24, 1992, p.1, November 25, 1992, p.16, and November 26, p.7.

I am not sure whether the practical suggestion....about interdicting air space is meaningful. Obviously it has crossed our minds, and I have read about such a suggestion. It would probably involve activity by the United States and others which could be authorised only by the United Nations, and I doubt whether the United Nations would authorise it. That proposal would not be viable...¹⁹⁸

Britain's efforts in staving off enforcement of the no-fly-zone over Bosnia were an illustration of the successful workings of British diplomacy at various levels in shaping the international response to the war, but they came under serious challenge in late 1992.

A declaration by the 50-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference [OIC] on December 1 in Jeddah brought some focus to the international debate. Calling for 'full implementation of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, including Section 42, to force the Serbs and government of Belgrade to comply with Security Council resolutions',¹⁹⁹ a deadline of 15 January was issued, failing which Muslim states would consider supplying arms to Bosnia's Muslims. The Syrian deputy secretary-general of the Arab League, Adnon Omran, alleged a 'terrible double standard in the West'. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic was more specific, singling out Britain as 'the biggest brake on any progress'.²⁰⁰

Within days of the OIC declaration, British UN troops in central Bosnia was forced to withdraw when coming under Serb fire,²⁰¹ and pressure grew for a fundamental review of international policy on Bosnia, with America in the forefront. Senior Bush Administration officials, led by Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, and nudged by president-elect Bill Clinton, concluded that the Serbs were routinely violating the UN

¹⁹⁸ Douglas Hurd, Debate on the Address. November 1, 1991, *Hansard*, Vol.198, c.122.

¹⁹⁹ *Independent*, December 2, 1992, p.12.

²⁰⁰ *Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 1992.

²⁰¹ European Commission President Jacques Delors described the UN troop withdrawal under Serb fire as 'a symbol of international impotence'. *Borba*, December 10, 1992, p.2.

no-fly zone, and called for an early resolution to enforce the flight ban, and possible exemption of the Bosnian Muslims from the arms embargo.²⁰² Former Secretary of State George Shultz specifically called for military force, describing intervention to uphold the UN resolution as 'a definable, doable mission'.²⁰³ Endorsing this, NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner announced contingency plans for a military operation, should the UN request the Alliance to intervene.²⁰⁴

France was by now also persuaded of the need for military enforcement of the no-fly zone,²⁰⁵ and opened talks with other Security Council members on December 14 for a resolution which would allow firing on aircraft violating the ban.²⁰⁶ The head of the French joint chiefs of staff, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, went further, arguing that an air and land blockade of the Serb forces operating in Bosnia could be established within two weeks of the UN passing the necessary resolution: "Either you use force or you withdraw."²⁰⁷ The UN commander in Sarajevo, Brig. Gen. Hussein Ali Abdel Razek, startled the UN hierarchy by declaring that the UNPROFOR operation had 'completely failed' and that only western military action could prevent further Serb attacks.²⁰⁸ The secretary-general of the WEU, Willem van Eekelen, described the UN operation in Bosnia as a shambles, with the humanitarian effort lacking

²⁰² *BBC Newsnight*, December 14, 1992. The UN General Assembly voted to lift the arms embargo by 102/0, with 57 abstentions, including Britain. *Independent*, December 19, 1992, p.1.

²⁰³ *New York Times*, December 9, 1992.

²⁰⁴ *New York Times*, December 12, 1992.

²⁰⁵ President Mitterand who had been amongst the most opposed in the French government to military intervention, now pushed for firmer action. 'Arbitration, conciliation and dialogue have been tried... [I am] counting on the UN Security Council to authorise enforcement of the no-fly zone, and clear roads to permit entry to camps and towns and cities'. *Liberation*, January 1, 1993, p.1.

²⁰⁶ *Borba*, December 14, 1992, p.3.

²⁰⁷ *New York Times*, 10 December 1992, *Sunday Times*, 13 December 1992, p.14, and *BBC Newsnight*, 14 December 1992.

²⁰⁸ *The Times*, December 9, 1992, p.11, *New York Times*, 9 & 13 December 1992, p.13.

any credibility,²⁰⁹ while the WEU parliamentary assembly, called on its nine member states to start planning for military intervention.²¹⁰ This was backed by the Netherlands foreign minister who offered Dutch air force help to enforce the exclusion zone.²¹¹ Dutch premier Ruud Lubbers accused the British EC Presidency of acting as if Yugoslavia was 'at the other end of the world'²¹² and, on the eve of the EC Edinburgh Summit, EC President Jacques Delors again criticised EC leaders' vacillation, reiterating that the only way of defeating the 'monstrous ideology' was through a credible threat of the use of force.²¹³

On December 14 at the CSCE conference in Stockholm, acting US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger did a surprising volte-face. Having opposed military intervention since the Croatian war, Eagleburger now sounded out governments on enforcing the no-fly-zone, and lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia. To the reported consternation of senior British officials,²¹⁴ Eagleburger also named ten 'war criminals' including Slobodan Milosevic, to be tried for war crimes.

British leaders knew that the issues raised could not be indefinitely deferred. John Major had managed to subdue criticism from backbenchers at the House of Commons,²¹⁵ but a more convincing response was required for Britain's western allies, particularly in view of the OIC deadline, and America's unexpected threat to support the removal of the arms embargo on Bosnia. Through a number of adroit

²⁰⁹ *The Times*, 9 December 1992, p.11.

²¹⁰ *Guardian*, December 4, 1992, & *Borba*, December 3, 1992, p.2.

²¹¹ *The Times*, December 15, 1992, p.1.

²¹² *Borba*, December 4, 1992, p.5.

²¹³ Politicari ili 'majke Tereze', (Politicians or 'Mother Teresas') *Borba*, December 10, 1992, p.2.

²¹⁴ *Observer*, December 20, 1992.

²¹⁵ Oral Questions, December 3, 1992. *Hansard*, Vol.215.

diplomatic manoeuvres conducted in the margins of international conferences and elsewhere, Britain gradually succeeded in re-establishing its own policy parameters. The arms embargo issue was relegated to the background, and the question of military intervention whittled down to the no-fly-zone issue. Even this decision was postponed, initially till the New Year, and then till the end of March 1993, by which time much of Eastern Bosnia had fallen to the VRS forces.

Britain argued the case against military intervention and for retaining the blanket arms embargo on several fronts, citing the threat to the safety of UN troops on the ground, and to the survival of the Geneva peace conference. While Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind expressed concern about a Serb retaliation against British troops, Douglas Hurd intimated that it might derail the peace conference. At the same time, a Downing St official contacted the foreign policy advisers of President Mitterrand who supported enforcement of the NFZ, with the information that no combat flights had occurred for two months. David Owen, meanwhile, worked to persuade other European leaders not to jeopardise the UN operation for the sake of shooting down 'a few militarily insignificant' Serbian helicopters.²¹⁶ Ironically, just days earlier, Owen had testified at the Foreign Affairs Committee that the Serbs were 'infringing [the no-fly zone] in significant numbers.'²¹⁷ On the ground in Bosnia, the British UN commander, Colonel Bob Stewart, took the unusual step of publicly airing his concern about the NFZ

²¹⁶ *Independent*, December 18, 1992. Owen met the Belgian Foreign Minister, Willy Claes, to warn him of the possible consequences to UN troops of enforcing the NFZ. ICFY: Record of Lord Owen's meeting with Belgian foreign minister, ref. CD92L09.PAR, December 9, 1992. He also met Spanish Premier Felipe Gonzales and Foreign Minister Javier Solana, to convey a similar message. ref: CD92K26.PAR.

²¹⁷ Owen further asserted that "it is a serious breach of the UN Security Council resolution...and that the Security Council will have to ensure this is fulfilled." Foreign Affairs Committee, Minutes of Evidence, December 10, 1992, 168.

enforcement.²¹⁸ In Geneva, British Ambassador Peter Hall, seconded to the peace conference from Belgrade, wrote a diary note in *Borba*, commenting that 'if a large number of people want war, it is hard to bring peace to the others.'²¹⁹ From Kings College London, former military commander Julian Thompson put the case against military intervention, proposing 'safe havens' for the Bosnian Muslims.²²⁰ From London there were conflicting signals. It was leaked that Douglas Hurd would confirm an enforcement resolution at the CSCE meeting,²²¹ whereas the Ministry of Defence was said to be taking a less flexible line. In fact, mainstream thinking in both ministries was indistinguishable. The confusion simply helped to blur the contours of British policy at a crucial moment.

According to Cabinet sources, the long-term strategy now emerging from British ministers was for a settlement to be reached based roughly on current Serb territorial gains, with the provision of a 'protected zone' for Bosnia's Muslims.²²² Serbs and Croats would be allowed to annex those parts of Bosnia where they were in the majority, with the remainder forming a Muslim mini-state. This would imply recognition of a 'Greater Serbia.'²²³

²¹⁸ *The Times*, December 17, 1992, p.10.

²¹⁹ *Borba*, December 12-13 1992, XII.

²²⁰ *Observer*, December 20, 1992, p.16.

²²¹ *Guardian*, December 15 & 16, 1992. Douglas Hurd stopped short of recommending the bombing of Serbian artillery, however, which was at that time proposed by France. In this, Hurd was supported by the US Defense Secretary and US Chief of Staff, Colin Powell.

²²² *The Times*, December 18, 1992.

²²³ 'Just maybe we could live with a greater Serbia', MARR, Andrew. *Independent*, December 18, 1992. The Sunday Times editorial put this in more graphic terms. "Yugoslavia today needs a new Lord Curzon with a ruler and red pen, ready to redraw the map and move the population accordingly. The only feasible answer is a sort of Bosnian Bophuthatswana based around Sarajevo and poised between the new, enlarged states of Serbia and Croatia." *Sunday Times*, December 20, 1992, p.17.

On December 14, at a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy committee of the Cabinet, a gradual approach was decided on, with the purpose of delaying a resolution to enforce the NFZ. An initial report would be made to the UN Security Council on violations of the NFZ, to decide what constituted a violation, which could then be followed by another UN resolution aimed at warning off the Bosnian Serbs, rather than triggering the immediate downing of helicopters.²²⁴

France now retreated from its stand over pre-emptive strikes on Serbian artillery positions although it continued to support enforcement of the NFZ. A timely letter from Karadzic to the British Prime Minister, threatening a Serb attack on UN troops in the case that Serb aircraft were targeted, may have helped to modify the French position. A further letter from Karadzic, which he termed 'a letter of intent', condemned plans to enforce the NFZ, and threatened war crimes proceedings against several international figures, including Lawrence Eagleburger, James Baker, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Austrian Foreign Secretary Alois Mock. Interestingly, no British name was listed due, as Karadzic put it, to Britain's 'refined diplomacy'.²²⁵ NATO member states accepted the British proposal for a 'goodwill' breathing space before deciding on enforcing the NFZ.²²⁶ On December 30, Douglas Hurd summed up his position on Bosnia:

We can guide and encourage, but we cannot dictate or guarantee peace in the Balkans...The war in Bosnia is a civil war...precision bombing of Serb targets...is unlikely to be effective against the Serbs

²²⁴ *The Times*, December 15, 1992, p.11.

²²⁵ *The Times*, December 23 & 24, 1992, p.1. The following week, Yugoslav Army chief of staff Zivota Panic stepped up the pressure, warning that military intervention would be resisted 'with all our means', threatening a third world war. *New York Times*, December 31, 1992.

²²⁶ *New York Times*, 19 December 1992. The ambivalent positions of Russia and China were also cited as reasons for a pause, despite the fact that Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev had stated that Russia 'if necessary will take joint measures to punish' those violating the NFZ. *Guardian*, 24 December 1992, p.7, and *Independent*, 31 December 1992.

unless backed by action on the ground...I do not myself believe in half an arms embargo.²²⁷

British diplomacy had again prevailed.

Conclusion

An examination of the international response to the main developments in Yugoslavia and its successor states during 1992 has ascertained the part played by Britain in the formulation of international policy, as the war moved from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina. It concludes that British-inspired efforts to secure a solution based on a negotiated settlement, acceptable to all sides, continued to dominate international policy through 1992, and that Britain assumed a leading diplomatic role, whilst averting all initiatives directed towards the effective threat or use of force. Although Britain was by no means consistently isolated in its position, it was the only major western power which held an almost unwaveringly consistent policy.

In the early months of 1992, there was a general consensus within the European Community and, initially, with the United States, on the main aspects of international policy. British politicians and diplomats played a leading role in refining the UN mandate in Croatia, promoting the cantonisation plan for Bosnia, and overseeing the transition of the arms embargo from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to its successor states, as well as blocking the extension of the UNPROFOR mandate to Bosnia, both as a preemptive measure before hostilities began, and in the early stages of the war, at a time when the JNA

²²⁷ Douglas Hurd, *Daily Telegraph*, December 30, 1992.

offensive clearly violated Bosnia's national sovereignty as a UN member state.

When the Vance Plan for UN troop deployment in Croatia - originating in Belgrade and assisted through the Security Council by Britain and France - was rejected in part by the Croatian government, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman was subsequently persuaded, mainly through the intervention of British diplomats and officials, to accept the Plan, without any guarantee that it would be fully implemented. In the event, key aspects of the Plan were violated by the Krajina Serbs, with tacit UN acquiescence, both by officials on the ground and in New York. There was no attempt to disarm Serbian paramilitaries, which rendered the UNPA zones unsafe for the return of non-Serbs displaced by the war, and generated further resentment and frustration, while the UN troops were denied the resources and mandate required to implement Security Council resolutions.

The JNA, judging by its difficulties in sustaining the frontline in Croatia, especially in Western Slavonia, and the level of disillusion within its ranks, would not have been in a position to open a second front in Bosnia-Herzegovina without the introduction of the UNPROFOR mission to protect its territorial gains in Croatia. The readiness with which the UN Security Council accepted Belgrade's proposal for a UN force within the Serb-occupied enclaves, along with its appeasement of crimes against humanity, not least in Vukovar, would have encouraged Serbia's leaders in the next stage of their 'Greater Serbia' project - the establishment of a Serb republic within Bosnia-Herzegovina. With large areas of Bosnia already under Serb control, and the UN arms embargo extended to Yugoslavia's successor states, Bosnian Serb nationalists, backed by the JNA and the Belgrade regime, were favourably placed to dictate the future order of Bosnia, irrespective of its international recognition, following the referendum carried out in accordance with the Badinter Commission recommendations. The Security Council did act to

demand JNA withdrawal from Bosnia, but the resolution was tardy and without enforcement powers. The JNA withdrawal, therefore, was largely cosmetic, and carried out after much of the 'ethnic cleansing' had occurred.

As demonstrated, Britain's policy was based on the decision to negotiate with, rather than confront, the Serbs at an early stage of the war and, while the introduction of economic sanctions over Serbia and Montenegro were supported by Britain, they were not firmly enforced, especially along the Danube where oil and other goods entered Serbia in abundance, and proved little more than a gesture, serving to allay public concern, while deferring talk of military intervention. Sanctions also helped to portray Serbia as a victim, a status which, in terms of their impact on the population was not wholly unmerited. Conversely, however, they created a sense of solidarity amongst Serbians, deflecting from Serbia's economic problems, and reinforcing Milosevic in power.

France, as a result of President Mitterand's dramatic flight into besieged Sarajevo, temporarily seized the initiative from Britain, prompting a reappraisal of Lord Carrington's plan to cantonise Bosnia, and moves towards a wider-based conference. Britain, holding the EC presidency, responded to the challenge and called an international conference, which was co-hosted by the British Prime Minister and the UN Secretary-General, serving both to reassert British influence in the international arena and, once again, to deflect calls for military intervention. Meanwhile, Lord Carrington was succeeded by another former British foreign secretary, David Owen, as EC envoy to an enlarged conference, renamed the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia, and relocated to Geneva. The inclusion of the UN responded to French pressure for an enlarged Conference and assuaged the sensitivities of the UN Secretary-General who had previously been expected to implement policies instigated in London or Brussels. Cyrus Vance was, meanwhile, appointed as UN envoy which, due to his track

record in protecting the Serb-held enclaves in Croatia, rendered him eminently qualified from the perspective of Belgrade.

The Foreign Office proposal for UN troops to be deployed as aid escorts was, in effect, applying a humanitarian policy to a political crisis. It temporarily assuaged some of the champions of military intervention, while demonstrating Britain's commitment on the ground. It also, however, inhibited alternative solutions to end the war. In addition, the despatch of lightly armed UN troops on a limited and ill-defined mandate would have clarified to the Serbs the limits of international intervention.

Equally, the Geneva Conference which was established within the London Conference, and mandated to formulate a peace plan acceptable to all sides, provided a pretext for deferring pressure exerted in varying degrees by the United States, France and other countries, for military intervention to bring the Serb offensive to a halt. In so doing, it also provided a 'breathing space' to the Bosnian Serb Army to reinforce its frontlines, and to secure further the crucial 'northern corridor' linking Serb-held territory in Croatia with Serbia. The war crimes commission, proposed by the United States and Germany, was one of the few London Conference recommendations to bear fruit in the longer term. Yet Britain was later singled out as having thwarted its development at all stages, including the provision of funding, the collection and handing over of evidence, the chairing, and even its naming.

Britain's response to the mounting refugee situation in 1992 was to support 'safe areas', recommending that all displaced people should remain as close to their homes as possible. This policy, although totally discredited by 1995, at the time served the dual purpose of reducing both the costs involved in hosting large numbers of refugees and the impact of a potential Bosnian lobby in Western Europe. As a further precaution, the British government, already having accepted a proportionally lower number of refugees vis-à-vis most other European

countries, tightened its immigration laws, and introduced a visa requirement for Bosnian refugees.

British government decisions on the Balkans, including the deployment of UK troops in a war zone, were reached in the absence of prior parliamentary debate, and often without the production of sufficient, or sufficiently accurate, information on which Members could base their own views. There was, on the other hand, a significant lobby within Parliament, in seniority if not in size, in support of the Serbian position, often dependent on historical analogy, which later evidence suggests had a bearing on parliamentary opinion. And, while British parliamentary procedure traditionally tended to confine foreign policy matters to ministerial level, it may be reasonable to conclude that the degree of public concern, and its dissatisfaction with the government's Balkans policy, together with the wider implications of the conflict itself, warranted more frank and open debate.

The diplomatic manipulation on the part of British players towards the end of 1992 over the no-fly-zone issue was both a reflection of earlier diplomatic manoeuvring surrounding the Vance Plan, UN troop deployment, the London Conference and other policies, and an indication of the manner in which policy was to be conducted thereafter.

In 1992, the policies formulated the previous year were confirmed. The Belgrade regime and Serb leaders in Bosnia and Croatia were further appeased, and military intervention, the threat which both Serbian President Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leaders most feared, was deferred indefinitely. The following year would see the Serbian leader's rehabilitation as a key player in international policy in the area, and the gradual acceptance of the 'civil war' theory, implying an equivalence of guilt.

CHAPTER 3

1993: DIPLOMACY BY CARTOGRAPHY

Introduction

On January 2, Cyrus Vance and David Owen, co-chairs of the International Conference for Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), introduced what became known as the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP) which, while accepting in principle the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, divided the state into ten provinces. This chapter assesses the VOPP and its consequences on the ground, and the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan which succeeded it, and examines the British role in the evolution of international policy, including the 'safe areas' concept, the presentation of policy in parliament and through the media, and Britain's position vis-à-vis those held by other states and institutions.

It concludes that the British government and its representatives continued to play a major role in international policy in former Yugoslavia, in deflecting from, or obstructing, other options which may have led to an earlier resolution of the conflict, often misleading parliament and the public on key developments related to the war and other perspectives.

Sources referred to include Hansard, testimony at the International Tribunal at the Hague (ICTY), the UN Srebrenica Report, ICFY COREPERS, personal memoirs and biographies, academic and other relevant publications, and local and international media reports.

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At the beginning of 1993, Britain was in a particularly vulnerable position, both regarding its policy in former Yugoslavia, and internally. Britain's diplomatic success in managing to secure a postponement in the no-fly-zone (NFZ) enforcement over Bosnia-Herzegovina now appeared a Pyrrhic victory, as the UNPROFOR mission, and Europe's Balkans policy as a whole, came under increasing criticism, to the point of threatening Britain's position as a permanent member of the Security Council, a privilege acquired in the altogether different post-World War climate.¹ Additionally, the US Democrat election victory meant the arrival at the White House of a president who had not only advocated a tougher line against Serb aggression when in opposition, but whose election campaign had been actively thwarted by the British Conservative party, jeopardising Britain's so-called 'special relationship' with America.² The new Clinton Administration identified Bosnia-Herzegovina as its main foreign policy concern,³ while expressing reservations concerning the Vance-Owen Plan. In France, too, senior politicians, military heads and human rights' groups were pressing for a more robust approach to end the Bosnian war.⁴ French UN troops, unlike the British, were stationed on the front line in Sarajevo and thus more vulnerable to attack and humiliation.⁵ In his New Year message,

¹ On assuming office, Secretary of State Warren Christopher served notice that the UN Security Council should be brought "into tune with 1993 realities rather than with 1946 realities", and intimated support for German and Japanese membership of the Council. *Independent*, January 28, 1993, p.8, and *Sunday Times*, January 31, 1993, p.11.

² Conservative officials had been despatched to the US during the election campaign to advise the Bush administration on the tactics that had helped Major win the 1992 election in Britain. *Sunday Times*, *Ibid*.

³ *Guardian*, January 23, 1993, p.13.

⁴ French foreign minister Roland Dumas declared that France was prepared to act alone if necessary to liberate Bosnian prison camps by force. *Independent*, January 11, 1993, p.1. French Chief of Staff Jacques Lanxade declared that the choice lay between the use of force or withdrawal: 'France, un soupçon de serbophilie', *Liberation*, March 12, 1993. *Medicins du Monde*, meanwhile, commissioned a campaign comparing Milosevic to Hitler. *European*, January 21-24, 1993.

⁵ On January 8, Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister Hakija Turajlic was assassinated by Serb forces while under French UN escort, prompting sharp reaction across the French political spectrum. The assassination occurred on the airport road, officially considered by the UN to be demilitarised and under its control. The Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Bernard Kouchner called for military

President Mitterand stated that France would be willing to take part in military operations in Bosnia if other Europeans and America also participated under the UN flag.⁶ Deputy Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, General Etienne Copel, asserted that

In a single day one air division, using combat and transport helicopters, could open up a camp, free the prisoners, and make itself scarce...to assist the defence forces in those areas under pressure from the Serbian militia...the best step would be to isolate the assailants from their bases in Serbia...cutting off their access routes...All that we require are professional troops of quality. Every major European army possesses them, in particular the British and French.⁷

Positions diverging from that of Britain were also evident elsewhere in Europe, as well as in most Islamic and non-aligned countries.⁸

On the domestic front, the ERM debacle the previous Autumn, the recession and the parlous state of the British economy as a whole⁹ may have been factors reinforcing the resolve of ministers in their endeavours to establish a post Cold War European order best serving Britain's perceived interests - not least in stemming the European Community drive towards political union and a viable common foreign and security policy - whilst forming or reinforcing alliances which would, directly or indirectly, assist in that objective. In this, both Serbia and Russia had a role. In early 1993, Serbian President Milosevic became partially

action in the case of failure of the Geneva talks, as did Socialist party leader Laurent Fabius, and Gaullist opposition leaders Jacques Chirac and Edouard Balladur. *The Times*, January 11, 1993, p.8.

⁶ *Independent*, January 4, 1993, p.6.

⁷ *European*, January 7-10, 1993, p.9.

⁸ EC Foreign Affairs Commissioner Hans Van den Broek, for instance, advocated the use of troops to combat Serb aggression, a view summarily dismissed by the Foreign Secretary: 'Mr van den Broek has held this position in public for a long time now...and it is not a position we agreed with...' Douglas Hurd, *Foreign Affairs Committee, Hansard*, January 28, 1993. No.276.

⁹ A confidential study by the Department of Trade and Industry concluded that, contrary to Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont's attacks on the 'self-denigrating myth' of manufacturing decline, British industry was fundamentally weak, and had little prospect of catching up with international competition for decades. Productivity levels in British manufacturing were still at least 25% below those of France and Germany. *Sunday Times*, March 14, 1993, p.1.

rehabilitated and regarded as an essential partner in the international peace process, his part in instigating the regional turmoil now largely overlooked.¹⁰ At the same time, Russia was gradually drawn into the decision-making process.

In early 1993, British ministers and diplomats made a number of moves to secure the support of the European Community, the US administration and the British establishment in its Bosnia policy. On January 22, John Major chaired a cabinet committee meeting, also attended by Lord Owen, where Britain's policy in ruling out combat action was further endorsed.¹¹ It was also agreed that the Security Council should not be asked to authorize enforcement of the NFZ over Bosnia-Herzegovina without the recommendation of the ICFY co-chairs. Owen, meanwhile, approached a number of European leaders including, on the eve of the Danish EC Presidency, Danish Foreign Minister Uffe-Ellemen Jensen to gain support for delaying enforcement of the NFZ.¹² During the same week, John Major wrote to Presidents Clinton and Mitterrand to urge them against supporting military intervention in Bosnia,¹³ following indications that the US, viewing the peace plan

¹⁰ UN mediator Cyrus Vance gave public credit to Milosevic, stating he had 'helped very considerably...to bring a turnaround...He contributed much', prompting some US commentators to comment that Vance had crossed the line dividing negotiation from appeasement. *Guardian*, January 14, 1993. There were also indications of a tacit agreement by Vance and Owen that the names of Milosevic and his allies would be dropped from the US government list of alleged war criminals. *European*, January 14-17, 1993, p.1.

¹¹ *Guardian*, January 23, 1993, p13. There was, however, some disagreement amongst senior government ministers at the meeting, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind favouring an early withdrawal of British forces in Bosnia. *Guardian*, January 25, 1993, p.8. Rifkind's position may also have been conditioned by the *Options for Change* defence programme which envisaged a cut in infantry battalions from 55 to 38 by 1995. *The Times*, January 28, 1993, p.1.

¹² 'I don't sense that the existing draft Security Council Resolution adds anything. The American message that they are prepared to use force is still resounding around Belgrade... Certainly I believe the Secretary General's request to the Security Council for a pause makes the utmost sense and you would be right to assume that Vance and my hands lie behind this'. David Owen. Letter to Danish Foreign Minister Ellemen-Jensen. December 31, 1992. COREU [communication through confidential EC telex network] Ref: CD92L31.PAR.

¹³ *Sunday Times*, January 31, 1993, p.1. It was confirmed by Douglas Hurd that the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office and the British embassy in Washington had all been mobilised to convince the Clinton Administration that intervention would do more harm than good. A Foreign Office source

advanced by Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance as deeply flawed, was poised to order military air strikes and exempt the Bosnian government forces from the arms embargo.

At a speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) at Chatham House on January 27, the Foreign Secretary defended Britain's role on the world stage, calling for a major international effort to avert the 'continuing slide into disorder'.¹⁴ At the same time, he defended the government's refusal to intervene directly to stop the Bosnian war declaring that, in the absence of a durable ceasefire, Britain would resist UN demands for British troops already deployed to assume the wider role of separating the parties to the war. Hurd also opined that 'to impose and guarantee order in the former Yugoslavia would take huge forces and huge risks over an indefinite period - which no democracy could justify to its people'.¹⁵ This, as well as contributing to an unsubstantiated Serb myth, also revealed a somewhat curious understanding of the concept of democracy!¹⁶ Describing the Bosnian war as just one of many dramas and tragedies which, while not directly affecting Britain, contained the seeds of wider conflict, and emphasized that there was nothing new in mass rape, the shooting of civilians and ethnic cleansing, the difference being that the media now brought those atrocities into sitting rooms around the world.¹⁷ The Foreign Secretary omitted to mention however that, unlike the other wars cited, the

commented that By selective bombing you can destroy a bridge or an airport but you cannot persuade the Serbs by such means to alter their policies...you do not improve the situation by lifting the arms embargo for Bosnians'. *Guardian*, January 29, 1993, p.10.

¹⁴ *Independent*, January 28, 1993, p.1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ National opinion polls challenged this view. See footnote 73.

¹⁷ 'In Georgia, in Azerbaijan, in Tajikistan, there is fighting of a greater savagery and intensity than anything happening in Bosnia. The public are barely aware of those conflicts, because the cameras do not often visit them - but they exist...' Douglas Hurd, *International Peacekeeping*. *Hansard*, February 23, 1993, Vol.219, c.774. See also *The Times*, January 28, 1993, p.1 & 8.

international community had already intervened in Bosnia, not least in the introduction of a blanket arms embargo.

At the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on January 28, the Foreign Secretary confirmed that British troops would not be used in combat missions in the Balkans.¹⁸ Addressing the Royal United Services Institute, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind also warned against military involvement in Bosnia,¹⁹ as did Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg:

We are almost all agreed that the conflict in Bosnia bears all the hallmarks of a civil war...there is general acceptance, too, that it is impossible to enforce by external force, a settlement of a civil war...²⁰

The 'civil war' argument, increasingly used to justify British policy in Bosnia, implied less international responsibility to intervene, other than in a humanitarian context.²¹ The Foreign Secretary was equally confident of his ability to defend Britain's perceived interests within the European Community:

I must say that I am strongly in favour of such co-operation as it is at present practiced and as it is laid down for the future in the treaty. I and others have been trying to work the system for three years and I believe that I have some knowledge of both its strengths and its limitations...

I am quite clear in my own mind that this system of co-operation, although not magic, adds to the effectiveness of British foreign policy without reducing our ability to protect our own British interests."²²

¹⁸ *Independent*, January 29, 1993.

¹⁹ *Guardian*, January 21, 1993.

²⁰ Douglas Hogg, *International Peacekeeping*, op.cit. c.855.

²¹ According to one expert on international law, the request by the Bosnian government, regarded by the UN as the only legitimate representative of Bosnia, for international armed action to stop the slaughter of civilians may well have been sufficient justification for intervention'. WELLER, Mark. Security Council stumbles over 'safe havens'. *The Times*, April 21, 1993, p.9. See also HAMPSON, Françoise. 'Law and War', in DANCHEV, Alex and HALVERSON, Thomas [ed.] *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Conflict*. Macmillan, 1996, pp.148-175.

²² Douglas Hurd, *European Communities (Amendment) Bill*, March 30, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.222, c.169-170.

EC Council of Ministers' meetings were increasingly less viewed as a means of shaping Balkans' policy, having been superseded by the Geneva Conference. In a letter to the Danish foreign minister, Owen revealed his close cooperation with Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak in drawing up the peace plan, which adopted a number of Susak's proposals, as well as his reliance on Milosevic as a peace broker.

...essentially the matter will be resolved by Milosevic. It is worth remembering that he negotiated the Croatian/Serbian deal with Cyrus Vance on January 2, 1992.²³

There was no reference to consultation with the Bosnian government.

The Vance-Owen Peace Plan

The International Conference for Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), also known as the Geneva Conference, which drew up the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, was established by the London Conference in August 1992. From the outset David Owen, a British appointee and former British foreign secretary, assumed the more 'hands on' role in the Vance-Owen partnership, remaining co-chair of the ICFY till June 1995.²⁴ Before his appointment, Owen had advocated strategic air strikes against Serb positions but his view soon came to reflect that of the British government, with the difference that he did not rule out air power to

²³ 'the Croatian deal...is essentially twofold; they will accept putting their potential Posavina province up in the north around Bosanski Brod in with Banja Luka province. This would give one northern province stretching from Banja Luka to Bijeljina and guarantee a corridor, which is the emotive question for the Bosnian Serbs, into Serbia...I went over this potential deal, which had only been proposed to me the night before in Zagreb by Susak, in great detail with Milosevic during our two hour meeting. He didn't say yes but he didn't say no...' Letter from Lord Owen to Danish Foreign Minister. December 31, 1992, op.cit.

²⁴ Vance missed several meetings and resigned in April 1993. *The Times*, April 2, 1993, p.17. See also SIMMS, op.cit. Chapter 4, for Owen's role in the negotiating process.

enforce his plan.²⁵ In drawing up the VOPP, European leaders tended to be advised by Owen rather than consulted, often on a bilateral basis.²⁶

The Vance-Owen Peace Plan, first presented to the Bosnian government and to Serb and Croat leaders on January 2, proposed the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ten autonomous provinces within a decentralised state, with most power devolved to the provinces, and progressive demilitarisation under UN supervision.²⁷ An intricate set of proposals for a bicameral parliament and national executive was drawn up, along with detailed work on the territorial divisions. The main drawback in implementation terms, however, was that despite the requirement for Serb forces to withdraw from around 27% of conquered territory, there was no enforcement provision included in the Plan. In fact, apart from the number of provinces proposed, and the considerably larger proportion of territory awarded to the Croat side, there was little substantive difference from the Cutileiro Plan.²⁸ The Croats, not surprisingly, accepted the Plan promptly, and in its entirety. Although representing just 17% of the population, they had under the VOPP been awarded approximately 27% of Bosnia-Herzegovinian territory. The divisive nature of the VOPP, especially vis-a-vis Croat/Bosniac relations, whereby towns like Travnik with a Bosniac majority were allocated to Croat administration, sowed the seeds for conflict in Central Bosnia.²⁹

²⁵ As Owen observed, however, 'We have had to face the situation that if there is no international will to take up arms, it reduces our diplomatic room for maneuver'. David Owen, *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1993, pp.5-6.

²⁶ Owen missed the EC Council of Ministers' meetings in October and February. OWEN, *op.cit.* pp.58 & 106.

²⁷ See map 2, p.351.

²⁸ David Owen argued strenuously that the VOPP was an improvement on the Cutileiro Plan, in that the provinces were not structured primarily on an ethnic basis. Elsewhere, Owen contradicted himself however. 'The rural Bosnian Serbs sat on over 60% of the country before the war, and we are offering them three provinces covering 43%.' Interview with David Owen, *Foreign Affairs*, *op.cit.* p.3.

²⁹ Hostilities had already flared up between these two groups in Prozor the previous Autumn, but elsewhere were largely contained before 1993.

The Bosnian government later signed up to the VOPP under acute international pressure, while Serb leaders withheld agreement, other than in principle, requiring a surrender of power over much of the Drina valley, allocated to the Bosnian government under the VOPP. The following month, VRS forces launched a major offensive in an attempt to gain overall control of the Drina valley, both for strategic reasons and to improve the Serb bargaining position at the negotiating table.

While the European Community, for the most part, initially defended the VOPP, in America it was widely criticised as unworkable, and appeasing 'ethnic cleansing'. When Bill Clinton took over the US presidency he pledged to take a more interventionist role than his predecessor. To this end, a full review of the situation was instigated by the State Department, including stringent sanctions' monitoring. The list of options considered included exempting the Bosnian Government from the UN arms embargo, and using strategic air power against Serb positions.³⁰ US Secretary of State Warren Christopher presented a six-point plan on February 10, 1993, which confirmed active US participation in the ICFY process. The crucial point relating to enforcement, however, was somewhat ambiguously worded:

The United States [is] prepared to do its share to help implement and enforce an agreement that is acceptable to all parties. If there is a viable agreement containing enforcement provisions, the United States would be prepared to join with the United Nations, NATO, and others in implementing and enforcing it, including possible US military participation.³¹

The operative word was 'viable'. The US Administration was aware of the inherent contradictions in the VOPP as, indeed, were President Milosevic, former FRY President Dobrica Cosic, and others in Belgrade who, in strongly urging Bosnian Serb leaders to sign, did so in the firm

³⁰ *New York Times*, January 28, 1993, A17.

³¹ Statement by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, February 10, 1993.

belief that the VOPP would not (and could not) be implemented on the ground.³² Milosevic was also convinced that the VOPP would eventually provide a channel for achieving his main war aim, a Serb state within Bosnia,³³ confident that UN troops were unlikely to be deployed in a combat role against the Serbs, and that the blanket arms embargo would remain in place, hindering the formation of a viable Bosnian army. The Serbian president's confidence derived not least from his experience of international negotiations over the previous two years where British and, to some extent French, influence had prevailed, with America remaining on the sidelines. Milosevic's position was also buttressed by public acknowledgement on the part of Owen, Hurd, Vance and others of his 'peace-brokering' role in the war.³⁴

As the new US president vacillated in face of his main European ally's intransigence British players, consistent with earlier practice, declared that, while Britain fully endorsed the VOPP, it rejected the threat or use of military force to implement it.³⁵ Also in contrast to other countries, Britain expressed reluctance to commit further troops to Bosnia until the ceasefire was seen to be holding,³⁶ a 'playing-for-time' approach which had much in common with that of Lord Carrington in Croatia in late 1991, after the Vance Plan was introduced, when withholding deployment of a UN force until a durable ceasefire had been secured had

³² SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* p.309-10

³³ *Ibid.* p.309.

³⁴ "I think that Milosevic is the most important figure in the whole region...I sense a realistic politician who will distance himself from [Seselj and Arkan]...He has been helpful in the Geneva process. Now we must persuade him to play a role in forcing the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan. The choice is Milosevic's; on what he decides hangs the fate of the Balkans". OWEN, David. *Foreign Affairs*, *op.cit.* p.9. See also Douglas Hurd, *Hansard*, *Bosnia*, April 29, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.223, c.1172, and Cyrus Vance, *Guardian*, January 14, 1993.

³⁵ See Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in *The Times*, April 20, 1993, p.8, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind and Col. Michael Dewar, Deputy Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in *Guardian*, April 15, 1993, p.8, and Cedric Thornberry, UN Head of Civil Affairs. *Diplomacy & Deceit. Bloody Bosnia Week, Channel 4*, August 1, 1993.

³⁶ *Sunday Times*, April 11, 1993, p.20.

facilitated ongoing Serb offensives in Eastern Slavonia and Dubrovnik, conducted in flagrant disregard of the proposed peace plan. In Bosnia in 1993, the tactic of waiting for a lasting ceasefire before despatching further UN troops, in the absence of significant international pressure ensured indefinite delay, and facilitated further territorial conquest.

The British government's flaccid approach to the implementation of the VOPP was evident at the Foreign Affairs Select Committee when Douglas Hurd, asked whether the Vance-Owen Plan meant 'a new major role for new UN involvement in...Bosnia',³⁷ replied:

The first aim must be the fighting should stop on the basis of agreement on the plan, or something like that [*sic*] ... There would need to be a UN involvement not as a protectorate but on the basis of helping those concerned in Bosnia to implement the plan on which they had agreed, and the nature of that involvement is far from clear... What we are looking for is an agreement between people who are weary of the fighting and do not see a prospect for themselves and their future by continuing to fight and looking for an agreement which will enable them to stop fighting without sacrificing something which they agree to be essential...that agreement will need to be based on people's perception of self-interest. It will need UN help but it will not need a UN protectorate because if it required that, it would not be based on agreement but on force, and that is not I believe realistic...³⁸

The statement was somewhat disingenuous. The Foreign Secretary would have been aware that agreement by the sides to implement the plan "without sacrificing something which they agree to be essential" was, in the circumstances, unachievable. The overtly casual approach adopted by Douglas Hurd at this juncture of the negotiations, and the further clarification that force would not be used, was tantamount to an invitation to the Serbs to pursue their objectives till they were, as Hurd put it, "weary of the fighting". The Serb leaders' main concern, the threat

³⁷ Ted Rowlands, Foreign Affairs Committee, January 28, 1993, 272.

³⁸ Douglas Hurd, *Ibid.* 272-4.

of international intervention,³⁹ had been allayed by the Foreign Secretary. Interestingly, Hurd made no reference to the 70,000 troops estimated by NATO as necessary for implementation of the VOPP.

Hurd's remarks were also significant in light of the perceptions and declared objectives of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic:

I wish to tell our forces not to worry, not to look at the maps...Our forces must hold their positions...We are a constitutional and sovereign nation and we want ethnic separation. This could, if necessary, be in a number of provinces as an interim phase. However...there must exist, and does exist, Republika Srpska, regardless of the number of provinces it constitutes. We will not accept anything that will prevent us from achieving our goals, directly or indirectly...⁴⁰

Karadzic viewed the Vance-Owen Plan as merely a phase in the broader process of establishing a Serb state within Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, even after signing the VOPP on May 2, Karadzic made it clear that the Serb goal of a separate republic had merely been postponed.⁴¹ Also significant from the Serb viewpoint was the fact that the VOPP failed significantly to reflect one of the main principles of the London Conference, namely, 'the non recognition of all advantages gained by force or fait accompli'.⁴²

America, as the only remaining superpower, was ostensibly the key international player. Yet, faced with the declared position of a major NATO ally, Britain, that British combat troops would not be deployed in Bosnia in any circumstances, the US administration was left with few options, all of them unpalatable. It could acquiesce in the VOPP, in the

³⁹ Karadzic said he could not accept the plan 'because I knew that the international community needed only 10,000 troops in Zvornik and the Posavina corridor to neutralize the Serbs.' SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* p.309-10.

⁴⁰ Radovan Karadzic, *Belgrade Radio*, January 12, 1993. [Author's translation]

⁴¹ *Guardian*, Comment, May 3, 1993.

⁴² The London Conference, Statement on Principles, (ii).

knowledge that (a) it was inequitable, and (b) any troops deployed to Bosnia in the non-combat role insisted on by Britain would constitute potential hostages, or it could activate its lift-and-strike policy without the consent of at least one major NATO ally whose troops, acting under a UN mandate, would be in the firing line. Such action could provoke the withdrawal of most UN troops from Bosnia (already threatened by Britain and France), leaving America shouldering the main responsibility for ending the war, and the obligation of assisting NATO member states who had deployed troops to Bosnia without a clear exit strategy, to withdraw in safety. It could also damage NATO irreparably. The Clinton Administration had not, contrary to claims by David Owen and others, adopted a supine position with regard to the Balkans.⁴³ It had inherited a situation with little room for manoeuvre, which it attempted to address in a number of ways. In February, Clinton despatched a 26-member team of experts to Bosnia, including state department and Pentagon officials, USAID officials, and doctors from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The executive summary of their report prepared in March, stated that

Even the best humanitarian program will be limited as long as more direct or forceful means are not applied to end the conflict itself or, at least, to shift its focus away from the civilian population.⁴⁴

The team concluded that the main threat to Bosnian civilians was not starvation but attacks by VRS forces, and that deliveries of food and supplies were doing little to address the real cause of suffering. The authors urged Washington seriously to consider military intervention.⁴⁵ On April 17-18, US leaders met to review the options. Lifting the arms embargo, with the backing of air strikes to preempt a major Serb

⁴³ Owen claimed that the Clinton administration had completely reversed its predecessor's policy on the Balkans, alleging this was partly due to the 'very emotive position' adopted on the issue by New York Times editors, 'on the basis of so little factual knowledge'. *Foreign Affairs*, op.cit. p.3. For other critics of the US position, both military and academic, see SIMMS, op.cit. pp.238-240.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *The Times*, April 12, 1993, p.9.

⁴⁵ *The Times*, Ibid.

offensive, was the option most favoured by Vice President Al Gore, Security Adviser Tony Lake, Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, senators of both parties, and Balkans experts within the State Department who, regarding western policy in Bosnia as a failure, pressed Christopher to announce strong military action to counter genocide.⁴⁶ Also, a multi-national team headed by Supreme Allied Commander in Europe General John Shalikashvili, after a year collecting intelligence and drawing up plans for intervention, concluded that an outright invasion and occupation of Bosnia could be achieved in 'a matter of days', while in a primarily airborne operation, 'the fighting would be over in less time than [the ground campaign] in Desert Storm', with few casualties.⁴⁷ The Pentagon, however, still led by General Colin Powell and entrenched in the Vietnam syndrome, continued to be the main forum in the United States resistant to military action in Bosnia.

On May 1, the US President publicly endorsed the lift-and-strike policy.⁴⁸ The following day, Serb leader Radovan Karadzic signed the VOPP in Athens, although deferring the final decision to the self-styled Bosnian Serb Assembly in Pale. Owen interpreted Karadzic's apparent submission as the outcome of a combination of months of peace-brokering on the part of the ICFY co-chairs and pressure from Milosevic. A more probable reason for the Bosnian Serb leader's *volte face*, however, was the imminent threat of NATO air strikes. According to the assessment of Serbian General Zivota Panic, Serbia at that time could withstand US air strikes for two days at the most, after which its anti-aircraft defences would collapse.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ DREW, Elizabeth. *On the Edge. The Clinton Presidency*. Touchstone, 1995, p.152. See Samantha Power for a detailed account of opposition to international policy on Bosnia amongst US State Department officials. POWER. op.cit. p.264-9.

⁴⁷ *Newsweek*, May 10, 1993, p.26. The Pentagon had prepared an armada of over 250 fighters and bombers to move into the area in preparation for air strikes. *Sunday Times*, May 2, 1993, p.1.

⁴⁸ DREW. op.cit. p.155.

⁴⁹ *European*, May 6-9, 1993.

The following day, Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited EC capitals and Russia to solicit support for the lift-and-strike policy. As he arrived in London, newspaper headlines announced that Britain would veto through the UN Security Council any US plan to arm Bosnia's Muslims.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Owen appealed to the West to withhold threats of air strikes⁵¹ and, just hours before Warren Christopher was due to meet the British Prime Minister, announced he had secured Bosnian Serb backing for the peace plan. Christopher's mission to Europe had been virtually aborted at the outset. According to one British diplomat, "there was nothing Christopher could have done to get a different outcome."⁵²

Britain found an unexpected ally in the US Ambassador to Britain, Raymond Seitz. Accompanying Christopher on his trip to Chevening to meet the British Prime Minister and the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, Seitz dismissed the US proposal as 'a cockamamie idea...largely...designed to satisfy the cantankerous Congress'.⁵³ That this view was not substantiated in the intensive high-level debate within the Clinton Administration prior to Christopher's trip was beside the point. In his memoirs, Seitz notes that he himself had suggested to John Major to inform Christopher that the British Cabinet would not accept the proposal, reflecting somewhat disingenuously that "[a]t a time of almost manic killing on European territory, the British and Americans seemed unable to find common ground"⁵⁴ Immediately after Christopher's return to Washington, the Administration considered putting the proposal to the Security Council, but was deterred by the

⁵⁰ 'Britain vetoes US plan to arm Muslims', *Sunday Times*, May 2, 1993, p.1.

⁵¹ 'Now is the time to talk of peace not war'. Lord Owen, quoted in *Independent*, May 3, 1993, p.1.

⁵² DREW, op.cit. p.155.

⁵³ SEITZ, Raymond. *Over Here*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998, p.328. According to one US historian, Seitz was not an admirer of the new US administration. See HALBERSTAM, David. *War in a Time of Peace*. Scribner, 2001, p.227.

⁵⁴ SEITZ, Ibid. p.330.

threat of a British veto.⁵⁵ The Secretary of State was later reported to have made little effort to sell the policy in Europe. But, as one official who travelled with Christopher remarked, 'it was in the interest of the British and the French to tell the press...that Christopher hadn't really tried to sell [the policy]'.⁵⁶

The British and French response to the US lift-and-strike proposals had a major impact on America's Bosnia policy.⁵⁷ Unilateral US intervention would risk an irreparable split in the NATO Alliance, and force America into assuming the leading role, with concomitant responsibilities. Christopher now sought to rein in US policy, even to the point of adopting some of the terminology of former detractors. On May 18, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Secretary of State pointed to 'atrocities on all sides', even suggesting that the Bosnian Muslims had committed genocide.⁵⁸

The US lift-and-strike policy had foundered along with the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. However, whilst the US threat of force prompted the Serb leader to sign the peace plan, the plan itself was instrumental, at least in part, in the sharp escalation of hostilities in eastern and central Bosnia. Britain's role in these developments is analysed in the following two sections.

The Serb Offensive on the Drina, Spring 1993

⁵⁵ MAJOR, *op.cit.* p.374.

⁵⁶ DREW, *op.cit.* p.156.

⁵⁷ HALBERSTAM, *op.cit.* p.229. Germany and the Netherlands were more supportive of US policy, Germany favouring exempting the Bosnian government from the arms embargo, and Holland the adoption of strategic air strikes against the Serbs.

⁵⁸ Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, *Federal News Service*, May 18, 1993, quoted in POWER, *op.cit.* p.308. See also WOODWARD, *op.cit.* p.306-7.

The Drina Valley in Eastern Bosnia was of vital strategic importance to both the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia itself. Full control was essential to facilitate Serb access to the Adriatic sea, and to provide a buffer zone for Serbia. Much of the area was captured by Serb forces in the spring and early summer of 1992. From some 200,000 non-Serbs in 1991, there remained a year later no more than 120,000, almost all of them herded into five enclaves, Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa, Konjevic Polje and Cerska. From the outset, access was a major problem. Only one aid convoy had reached Gorazde and Srebrenica between April and December 1992. Reports filtered through of large numbers dying of starvation or disease, of refugees expelled from surrounding areas being forced to sleep outside in sub-zero temperatures, and children undergoing amputations resulting from shrapnel wounds, without anaesthetic.⁵⁹ Britain, as a main troop contributor, had an influential role in organising aid delivery in Bosnia. Ministry of Defence official Col. Austin Thorp clarified the strategy to the Foreign Affairs Committee:

Because of the UNHCR-led operation, it became apparent very early on in the experience of Bosnia that proceeding by consent was much easier if you did not have to cross the front lines where consent tended to break down because the perception of the parties was that one was delivering sustenance to their enemies. That led the UNHCR to develop a concept whereby they now deliver aid to Central Bosnia from Split, to Eastern Bosnia from Belgrade.... thereby in most instances avoiding crossing front lines.⁶⁰

Since, as the MoD official confirmed, aid to the Bosniac-inhabited enclaves in eastern Bosnia was delivered from Belgrade, and could only proceed by consent, it followed, therefore, that the deliveries were totally under Serb control.

⁵⁹ Simon Mardel, a World Health Organisation doctor, travelling to Srebrenica as part of UN General Morillon's team, reported at least 2,000 sick and wounded, dying at the rate of 20-30 daily, and hundreds suffering from pneumonia and malnutrition. HALBERSTAM, *op.cit.* p.202.

⁶⁰ Col. Austin Thorp. Directorate of Military Operations, Ministry of Defence. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Hansard*, March 11, 1993, 517. For convoy routes, see map 6, p.353.

The Assistant Under Secretary of State (Commitments) Bill Reeves clarified the position further:

[T]he mandate and the Ministerial decision to commit troops were both based on the intention to deliver aid by negotiation of safe passage; there was to be no fighting of the aid through. I do not believe Ministers would wish to cross this bridge even if it were desirable. I do not think it is desirable or necessary anyway, because in general aid delivery has succeeded very well...the rules of engagement have been more than adequate to allow our soldiers to defend themselves if they are attacked...⁶¹

The bankruptcy of a strategy which relied on the mutual consent of unequal parties had been unwittingly exposed by the MOD officials. Moreover, the Foreign Affairs Committee had been misinformed. In early December 1992, one convoy managed to reach Srebrenica, but all the medical supplies had been removed by the Serb militia at checkpoints. There were no further deliveries and, in February 1993, the Drina valley came once more under heavy Serb bombardment.

Weeks later in the House of Commons, the Foreign Secretary spoke with confidence of the aid delivery programme:

Our troops on the ground...have done superb work...have so far escorted 450 convoys carrying 34,000 tonnes of aid...⁶²

The UNHCR Special Envoy in Bosnia, Jose-Maria Mendiluce, had a different perspective:

How can one qualify as "success" our ability to cross front lines to feed the people in enclaves, besieged areas, etc. while at the same time the same people were killed under shelling, sniper fire, were raped, and terrified. How to accept the tendency to consider our role more or less as a trucking and airline company, reducing our objectives just to feed those persons lucky enough to

⁶¹ Assistant Under Secretary of State (Commitments), Bill Reeves, *Ibid.* 524.

⁶² Douglas Hurd. *Bosnia. Hansard*, Vol.223, April 19, 1993, c.21

survive?⁶³

Later that year, the whole humanitarian operation came under increasing criticism, including from David Owen, and the former armed forces minister.⁶⁴

In February, America initiated the airdrop programme which provoked criticism from a number of British politicians who expressed fear of Serb reprisals. Despite the obvious shortcomings of the programme, however, air drops were the only means of getting aid to the area during that period.⁶⁵ In early March 1993, two of the enclaves, Cerska and Konjevic Polje, fell to Serb forces as thousands of civilians fled the Serb advance, and there was renewed public pressure for UN action to end the slaughter, and lift the siege of the enclaves.⁶⁶ The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, opined that, even based on the most conservative reports, Serbs were carrying out a massacre of Muslims in eastern Bosnia.⁶⁷

⁶³ MENDILUCE, Jose-Maria. Former UNHCR Envoy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 'Limits of humanitarian action: the case of Former Yugoslavia'. Preliminary background paper for Conference on Conflict and Humanitarian Action, October 1993 [Unpublished].

⁶⁴ Former Armed Forces Minister Archie Hamilton challenged the viability of the whole UNPROFOR operation, one of Britain's main pillars of policy in Bosnia, pointing out that '... throughout the conflict we have been feeding the warring factions in Bosnia. UN commentators are rather reluctant to accept that massive stores of UN foodstuffs in Bosnia are held by the militia. Therefore, we have moved from the people who want to do the fighting in Bosnia the boring logistic problem of feeding their troops because that has been done with UN food. The aid that we have given to Bosnia may have prolonged the conflict and more people may have died than would have done so if we had had nothing whatever to do with it.' Statement on the Defence Estimates. *Hansard*, Vol.230, c.57. David Owen also later stated that the whole strategy of protecting and delivering aid might need to be fundamentally reviewed, due to more potential hostage-taking, security of UN personnel on the ground, and lack of cooperation. Geneva Talks on Union, COREU 93102A.PAR, September 2, 1993.

⁶⁵ *UN Information Notes*, April 1993.

⁶⁶ A Daily Telegraph Gallup poll conducted across Britain between April 1 and 6 revealed widespread support (61%) across the political spectrum for military intervention in Bosnia to enforce a peace settlement, with British troop participation. 47% believed it would be desirable even if the force were likely to suffer heavy casualties. 68% were clear that a substantial force would be needed. 32% sympathised more with the Muslims, and only 10% with the Serbs. Significantly, however, 29% did not know whom to support. *Daily Telegraph*, April 15, 1993.

⁶⁷ *New York Times International*, March 4, 1993, p.A6.

On April 8, the International Court of Justice, the UN's main judicial body to settle disputes between states, ordered Serbia to prevent acts of genocide in Bosnia Hercegovina. The 14-judge court ruled that:

The government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [Serbia and Montenegro] should immediately, in the pursuance of its undertaking in the [1948 Genocide] Convention, take all measures within its power to prevent commission of the crime of genocide... [and that Serbia should ensure that] any military, paramilitary or irregular armed units which may be directed or supported by it... do not commit any acts of genocide...whether directed against the Muslim population of Bosnia and Herzegovina or against any other national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

On April 14, the US special envoy to peace negotiations on the former Yugoslavia, Reginald Bartholomew, declared that the US would support lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia if the Serbs did not sign up to the Plan.⁶⁸ As the mass evacuation from Srebrenica dominated world headlines, the British government was virtually alone amongst western powers in being resolutely opposed both to military intervention to break the siege of the enclave, and to lifting the arms embargo. An unnamed Whitehall official expanded on government tactics at such times:

We've been here before. People are clearly bewildered in front of their television sets, but if the siege of Srebrenica now moves away from the headlines, the pro-intervention mood will probably recede again. We were here when Vukovar fell in November 1991, before the London Conference in August last year, and when Sarajevo appeared to be falling...The tactic of this government has been to sweat it out. The effect of the various stages of the war has not proved to be cumulative. It's a bit like Northern Ireland.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the UN no-fly zone over Bosnia Herzegovina, introduced the previous October, was yet to be enforced, due to British and Russian opposition, despite pressure from the US and France. Douglas Hurd

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, April 15, 1993.

⁶⁹ Quoted in *Independent*, April 7, 1993, p.10.

cited the safety of British troops, insisting that Britain could not for domestic reasons support any measures directed primarily against the Serbs.⁷⁰ International disagreement over the wording of the resolution meant that the vote was postponed several times, the delays crucially affecting the situation in Srebrenica, as UN officials announced that the enclave was being shelled from the Serbian side of the border.⁷¹ On April 1, Britain finally agreed to enforcement, and to contribute 12 tornado F3 jets to the NATO operation, although the departure of the aircraft was postponed due to a dispute over the rules of engagement and the degree of enforcement, Britain and Russia favouring a more 'graduated' response. As Britain argued with its western allies, Karadzic, exploiting the rifts on Bosnia, visited Russia to lobby for support, while Russian right-wing journalists and military figures made frequent visits to Belgrade.

On April 17, with VRS forces in sight of Srebrenica town centre, UN Security Council Resolution 819 declared Srebrenica a 'safe area', and 150 Canadian UN troops were drafted in. Two days later, the Foreign Secretary made a statement in the House of Commons which was, both by omission and emphasis, misleading. Without referring to the wide-scale ethnic cleansing which had swept across eastern Bosnia, Douglas Hurd laid emphasis on the ceasefire achieved in Srebrenica and its new status as a 'safe area'. He also commented at some length on the part played by the British troops, the ODA and the RAF in delivering aid in Bosnia, and the financial contribution of the British government to the

⁷⁰ The troops did not necessarily agree with this view, however. *The Times*, March 31, 1993. On troop security, Rosalyn Higgins had this to say: 'The need to provide security to one's peacekeeping forces on the ground cannot, for example, as has been recently suggested, be a reason for deciding that enforcement is inappropriate. If enforcement is needed there is definitely no concurrent role for peacekeeping'. Memorandum submitted by Professor Rosalyn Higgins, QC to the Foreign Affairs Committee. *The Relationship between Peacekeeping and Sanctions*. February 17, 1993, I.

⁷¹ Western intelligence reports suggested that up to 200 tanks and heavy artillery crossed the border to join the Srebrenica offensive, despite denials from Belgrade. *The Times*, April 24, 1993, p.12 and *Guardian*, March 18, 1993, & March 29, 1993, p.8. NATO sources estimated at least 20,000 regular Serbian army troops were fighting in Bosnia, including the Valjevo and Uzice Corps.

relief agencies. He did not inform the House that the UN troops were not there to protect the civilian population, nor even to ensure that aid got through, other than that permitted by the VRS forces at the checkpoints.

The deployment of Canadian UN troops in Srebrenica was orchestrated from Britain, and misunderstood by many commentators at the time.⁷² The Foreign Secretary's warning - that injury to Canadian troops would be met by force from Britain - was not, as might be surmised, a change of British policy to a more combative posture. Britain was merely drawing a 'line in the sand'. Force was reserved to protect UN troops, and did not extend to the civilian population the troops had purportedly entered the enclave to protect. The 'safe area' concept, in other words, was simply a gesture to preempt US military action, and assuage public opinion.⁷³

In order to preempt a large-scale US initiative, sources close to Douglas Hurd stressed that any air strike against Serb positions would be British-led, and narrowly confined to rescuing the UN Canadian troops in Srebrenica.⁷⁴ At a meeting of EC foreign ministers during the weekend of April 24-25 in Hidsøgaard castle in Denmark, ministers agreed to 'sweeping' sanctions against Serbia, and backed the British initiative to use limited air power to assist the Canadian troops.⁷⁵ In this way, British ministers engaged their EC colleagues' support for limited air power for a narrowly-defined, specific purpose, namely, the rescuing of

⁷² The mandate may also have been misunderstood by the Canadians themselves. Canada had been asked to supply troops to stabilize the situation around Srebrenica, under the impression that their mandate would be strictly humanitarian. After their arrival, Canadian Foreign Minister Barbara McDougal phoned Douglas Hurd warning him that the Canadians did not have sufficient resources to prevent a breakdown of the ceasefire. See HONIG/BOTH, op.cit. p.107.

⁷³ A Mori poll, taken in April 1993, revealed that only 20% of British people were satisfied with British government policy on Bosnia, 64% supported military intervention, and 32% the lifting of the arms embargo. *BBC Panorama*, April 19, 1993.

⁷⁴ *Sunday Telegraph*, April 25, 1993, p.1.

⁷⁵ *Guardian*, April 26, 1993, p.10.

UN troops in Srebrenica, at the same time deflecting the US call for more extensive air strikes in the days leading up to the US Secretary of State's visit to European capitals.

Conflict in Central Bosnia: Ahmici

Wide-scale hostilities between Bosnia's Muslim and Croat communities broke out in Central Bosnia in the immediate aftermath of the Ahmici massacre, which took place a few miles from the British UNPROFOR headquarters in Vitez. The discovery of a massacre perpetrated by Bosnian Croat forces on Muslim civilians within a hitherto relatively peaceful area, at a time when world attention was focused on the Srebrenica crisis, brought a new dimension to the Bosnian war and, in international terms, proved to be a major watershed.⁷⁶ The Ahmici massacre later led to the indictment, and subsequent sentencing, of several Bosnian Croats. The massacre occurred on April 16, but was not brought to public attention until six days later by the British UN commander, Col. Bob Stewart, who claimed he had no prior knowledge of the massacre. Within hours of its discovery, however, the massacre received world-wide publicity,⁷⁷ impacting significantly on public perception of the Bosnian war at a time when the United States was contemplating air strikes against Serb positions and threatening to lift the arms embargo.

The war which ensued in Central Bosnia raged until March 1994, when a US-brokered agreement led to the establishment of the Bosnian

⁷⁶ 'Ahmici was one of the turning points...for the world's perceptions of the Bosnian war. Overnight it became more complex, harder to reckon on a moral compass, and somehow shaded in grey. For it was by now a three-way struggle'. BELL, Martin. *In Harm's Way*, Hamish Hamilton, 1995, p.151. Simon Jenkins wrote 'I have no doubt of the turning point. It came on April 16, when Croat guns opened up on Muslim villages near Vitez...' *The Times*, June 9, 1993.

⁷⁷ TV crews from the BBC and ITN who accompanied Col. Stewart at the time of the discovery of the massacre, filmed the event which made headline news. The same evening, Col. Stewart gave an extended interview to CNN. STEWART, op.cit. p.298.

Federation, and an uneasy peace between Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, for the remainder of the war. The war raised many issues, however, both at the time, particularly in relation to the Vance-Owen Plan, and later, following the publication of personal memoirs, and the submission of evidence by British UNPROFOR troops at the Blaskic, Kupreskic and Kordic trials at the ICTY.

The seeds of mistrust had already been sown following an alleged agreement between the Serbian and Croatian Presidents, Milosevic and Tudjman, in March 1991 at Karadjordjevo to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina between their respective states. Tensions on the Croatian side arose in 1991, with the perception that Bosnia's Muslims had played either a neutral role in the Croatian war, or fought with the JNA against Croatia, and were militarily unprepared for the Serb offensive in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷⁸ The Bosnian government forces observed that Croats were unwilling to fight on equal terms against the common enemy following the split within the HDZ in Bosnia-Herzegovina in early 1992, when Mate Boban, an appointee of Croatian President Tudjman, took over the HDZ leadership in Bosnia. On January 15, Boban sent an ultimatum to the Muslims ordering them to surrender their arms. When they refused, the Croat forces (HVO) arrested hundreds of Muslims.⁷⁹ The considerable influx of (mainly Muslim) refugees into Central Bosnia as a result of ethnic cleansing by Serbs in Northern Bosnia and Jajce further shifted the ethnic balance in an area still besieged by the Bosnian Serb Army.

⁷⁸ As Stjepan Kljuic, Bosnian Croat leader till February 1992, explained, however, 'The presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina... was aware of its impotence, and the only thing it could do was to mobilise the reserve police force.' According to Kljuic, 10,000 Bosnian Muslims took part in the defence of Croatia. Kordic trial, 1999. *ICTY*, p.8748.

⁷⁹ 'Many were beaten, even killed, or made to dig trenches exposed to enemy fire'. Trial Chamber Statement. *The Prosecutor v. Tihomir Blaskic. ICTY*, March 3, 2000, 2/41.

According to a wide range of international observers on the ground, the Vance-Owen Peace Plan played a major role in forging ethnic division in Central Bosnia, through an inequitable, and at times provocative, allocation of territory. The 'ethnic cleansing' by Croat forces of Bosniacs from Prozor in Autumn 1992, occurring just weeks before the VOPP was presented, appeared to be ratified by the VOPP. According to British UNPROFOR Commander Bob Stewart, the Plan had exacerbated hostilities in Central Bosnia which, he claimed, complicated his efforts, made the ethnic partition of Bosnia inevitable, and directly triggered 'ethnic cleansing' in his area.⁸⁰ One senior officer serving with the Cheshire Regiment, commented:

it was quite obvious that the Croats were looking at the way in which the Serbs appeared to get away with what they got away with through force of arms. The Serbs take a piece of ground, the political community, the Vance-Owen Plan seemed to acquiesce and almost be seen to reward the efforts of the Serbs...a great deal of the effort of the Croat forces was to try to secure routes...within Central Bosnia, to link up the main Croat centres of population.⁸¹

Another British officer observed that the Vance-Owen Plan

cut across existing lines of demarcation of responsibility. It changed the emphasis in particular areas, throughout Bosnia...the result of which was that the balance of power was going to change from the *status quo* that had existed at the time. And this was causing concern to all parties. Wherever I went and spoke, no one had a good word to say about the implications of implementing this particular plan..."⁸²

A Danish army officer working as an ECMM monitor in Central Bosnia, commented that 'there were a lot of individuals that didn't like this plan because we were afraid that [it] would increase the problems in the

⁸⁰ *Guardian*, April 24, 1993, p.23.

⁸¹ Bryan Watters, Blaskic trial, 1997. *ICTY*, p.3369-71.

⁸² Philip Jennings, Kordic trial, 1999. *ICTY*, p.8987.

area'.⁸³ Payam Akhavan of the UN Centre for Human Rights observed that 'there was a sense, because of the tremendous gains which the Bosnian Serbs had made, and the fact that the Vance-Owen Peace Plan ratified those gains in many respects by recognising it as a *fait accompli*, that the other parties may wish to do the same in order to achieve the same result'.⁸⁴ The UN Commander in Bosnia, General Cot, also considered that the war in central Bosnia was a direct consequence of the VOPP.⁸⁵

Croat nationalism, initially confined mainly to Mostar and Eastern Herzegovina, grew more widespread with the transfer of Dario Kordic, a nationalist hardline leader, to Central Bosnia, demonstrating the Croat intent to create ethnically 'pure' areas within a hitherto ethnically-mixed region. The hostilities in January 1993 around Gornji Vakuf, within days of the presentation of the Vance-Owen Plan, were a further indication that unrest could become widespread in Central Bosnia.⁸⁶ According to UN Human Rights Rapporteur Tadeusz Mazowiecki,

the lack of an effective international response to counter the policy of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Serb forces from the beginning of the war created the precedent of impunity which has allowed them to continue, and which has encouraged Croat forces to adopt the same policy...⁸⁷

⁸³ Lars Baggesen, Kordic trial, 1999. *ICTY*, p.7467.

⁸⁴ Blaskic trial, 1997, *ICTY*, p.5396. Other international observers made similar observations. See also Col. Bob Stewart's view of the Vance-Owen Plan. STEWART, op.cit. p.283.

⁸⁵ COT, ed., op.cit. p.127. Jean Cot was UN Force Commander in Former Yugoslavia from June 1993 till March 1994.

⁸⁶ See testimony of Andrew Williams on Croat plans to take over Gornji Vakuf, a Croat-designated area under the Vance-Owen Plan, in January 1993. Kordic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.6006-6015. Trial Chamber Statement, March 3, 2000, op.cit. also noted attempts by Croat forces to 'Croatise' some territories by force, to accord with the Vance-Owen Plan.

⁸⁷ As quoted by Payam Akhavan at the Kordic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, 5944.

The events of April 15-16, including the kidnapping of the Croat general Totic, and the murder of his four bodyguards in broad daylight in Zenica, and the attacks on Vitez, Ahmici, Santici and other villages, made no sense politically or militarily to most inhabitants, or to foreign observers.⁸⁸ Some believed they had been instigated from outside.⁸⁹ In the preceding days Croat leaders, preempting implementation of the Vance-Owen Plan, had attempted to take control of overwhelmingly Bosniac areas, including Travnik where Mate Boban made an inflammatory speech, insisting that Croatian flags be flown on public buildings in 'Croat designated' cantons.⁹⁰ The official language became 'Croatian', children's schoolbooks were printed in Zagreb in the 'Croatian' language,⁹¹ and salaries were paid in Croatian currency.

A further factor which may have contributed to the tensions in Central Bosnia was the handling of an already delicate situation by senior British UNPROFOR (BritBat) officers of the Cheshire Regiment. Some of the conflicting evidence referring to the discovery of the massacre is examined below, together with an assessment of the British response, both with regard to the publicity which ensued from its discovery, and its investigation.

According to testimony given to the ICTY, British UNPROFOR headquarters was in possession of clear evidence of a massacre at

⁸⁸ "The main area within the Lasva Valley was generally peaceful... and other than occasional disagreements at the lower tactical level in the village, between the different ethnic groups...the alliance against the Serbs was generally in place. Bryan Watters, Kordic trial 1999, *ICTY*, p.5674-5. Both Bosnian Croats and Muslims testified to peaceful relations before the outbreak of war. See Kupreskic trial, 1998, *ICTY*, p.5206-7, 1893-4, 640-1, 1150-1, 1015, 2340, 2538, 2877-9, 3180-1, 8224, 8332, 5442.

⁸⁹ A member of the Cheshire Regiment serving in Gornji Vakuf testified that British mercenaries were fighting with the Bruno Busic and Ludvig Pavlovic Brigades, 'shock' troops forming the nucleus of the future 'Herceg Bosna' army, whose appearance in an area signalled potential unrest. The Ludvig Pavlovic Brigade was stationed in Vitez. Andrew Cumming, Kordic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.6006-6035.

⁹⁰ Blaskic trial, November 10, 1997, *ICTY*, p.3380.

⁹¹ BRINGA, Tone. *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, Princeton University Press, 1995, xviii.

Ahmici on April 16 itself, within hours of its occurrence, from a number of BritBat soldiers who had been present at Ahmici that day. Matthew Woolley, one of the first British soldiers to enter Ahmici on April 16, concluded that 'a slaughter' had taken place there.⁹² Sergeant Woolley testified in some detail as to the conditions he found in Ahmici on April 16, including 20% of houses burning, HVO soldiers in the woods around the village, 'up to 30 people in the cellar...5 with significant injuries, including elderly people, women and small children'.⁹³ He also confirmed that some houses were destroyed whilst BritBat soldiers were present in Ahmici.⁹⁴

Platoon Commander Dooley, the operations officer on April 16, testified that he heard fighting in Ahmici reported over his radio that morning, and at lunchtime took four Warriors to Ahmici on a reconnaissance trip, reporting back to his commanding officer, Major Martin Thomas, at BritBat HQ that

there was a lot of dead people on the sides of the road near the houses... a number of dead bodies...we could see them through the doors and beside the housing...we took the dead...around 6 in number because that's all we could get in the ambulance...with the number of bodies seen we could have gone all day...⁹⁵

Similarly, Colour Sergeant Andre Kujawinski testified that on the afternoon of April 16, driving through Ahmici, he had discovered

lots of houses on fire...destroyed...lots of bodies, women and children strewn about the fields...we noticed...on a doorstep there was a man and a child...the man had his left arm around his son, both were

⁹² Kupreskic trial, 1998, *ICTY*, p.3554.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p.3497-3536.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.3539.

⁹⁵ Kupreskic trial, 1998. *ICTY*, p.2470-2478.

dead...I continued out to point 6, which is a large turnaround area...and as we looked back at point 5, which we commonly referred to as the Swiss chalet, I noticed a large amount of soldiers in dark uniforms...⁹⁶

Colour Sergeant Ian Parrott offered similar testimony.⁹⁷ These details were all logged in the Milinfosum, the daily summary of information produced at BritBat HQ, in several entries dated April 16, each with grid references. ⁹⁸

Evidence offered by senior British officers was curiously in conflict with this, however. British UNPROFOR Commanding Officer Bob Stewart, testifying as a 'trial chamber witness', did not initially admit to any knowledge of large-scale atrocities at Ahmici. Neither, initially, did Brian Watters, his Second in Command, nor Major Thomas, the Operations Room officer that day. According to his memoirs, Bob Stewart was unaware of atrocities in Ahmici (or even of the village's existence) before he was directed there by Bosnian government fighters on April 22.⁹⁹ Although spending part of April 16 in Zenica, Stewart had returned to BritBat headquarters at least twice that day.¹⁰⁰ On questioning at the Blaskic trial, Stewart placed blame on the Dutch transport battalion stationed in the village next to Ahmici, who 'to their shame did nothing about it'.¹⁰¹ This conflicted, however, with Bryan Watters' testimony that

⁹⁶ Blaskic trial, 1997, *ICTY*, p.4112. The Swiss chalet, also known as the bungalow, was at the top end of Ahmici.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p.5020-1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pp.22062-3.

⁹⁹ The Bosnian soldiers gave the atrocities at Ahmici as their reason for not adhering to the UN-brokered ceasefire. STEWART, *op.cit*, p.294.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* pp.294 and 283.

¹⁰¹ Blaskic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.23836.

the Dutch battalion had indeed reported fighting in Ahmici on the morning of April 16.¹⁰²

Major Thomas, the Operations officer at Vitez HQ that day, was also vague in his testimony. When cross-examined as to whether he had heard from BritBat forces in Ahmici on April 16, he replied

I would have done, because it was my company that were the Ops Company at the time. This is where I am unclear on the chronology of this...the exact period when Lieutenant Dooley discovered the massacre in Ahmici.¹⁰³

Major Thomas visited the village for the first time on April 17, but took what he termed as 'only a very cursory look at Ahmici'.¹⁰⁴ While admitting that 'there had been terrific violence used against the occupants of the village... It was quite clear that people were murdered in their homes...' ¹⁰⁵ Thomas made no formal report of his visit.¹⁰⁶ Nor, apparently, did he inform his commanding officer of the level of atrocity there.¹⁰⁷

The testimony of Bryan Watters, Second in Command to Bob Stewart, who in Stewart's absence was in charge on the morning of April 16, is of particular note. When asked at the Blaskic trial whether he was aware of the level of atrocities in Ahmici at the time, Watters replied

¹⁰² Kordic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.5840.

¹⁰³ Blaskic Trial, 1997, *ICTY*, p.2645. Initially Thomas claimed Dooley had discovered the massacre in Ahmici *after* his own visit, but later retracted this under questioning. The Milinfosum record would anyway have clarified the chronology. According to Bryan Watters' testimony, Major Thomas had directed tanks and ambulances into Ahmici at around 11 am on April 16. Kordic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.5764-5.

¹⁰⁴ Blaskic trial, 1997, *ICTY*, p.2585.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p.2587-8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p.2646.

¹⁰⁷ See Stewart's evidence at the Kordic trial, *ICTY*, p.12411.

No, we were not. We were aware of the level of destruction...each time we went into the village of Ahmici, the vehicles literally had snipers' bullets pinging off them, so it was not very safe to dismount...all [the soldiers] had seen was dead animals and destroyed houses... there was no reason on the 16th to specifically focus on Ahmici.¹⁰⁸

Watters' account, however, not only contradicted the testimony of Dooley, Kujawinski, other BritBat soldiers in Ahmici that day, and the BritBat Milinfosum of April 16, but was at variance with his own later testimony at the Kupreskic and Kordic trials, where he stated that, on patrol down the Lasva valley around 8 am on April 16, he had seen bodies of 'men and women and children...all civilians ...lying in the fields' in the Ahmici area.¹⁰⁹

Watters also gave conflicting evidence about the level of overall fighting in the area on the morning of April 16, commenting at one point that

the morning of the 16th was a very, very confusing situation, as we were getting dozens of reports from the UN, the UNHCR, the HVO, and the BiH and our own reconnaissance forces, of fighting up and down the valley north Kiseljak, Jelinak, Kruscica, Novi Travnik, and so on.¹¹⁰

Afterwards, however, in possible explanation for his vagueness on the details of his meeting with the Croat and Muslim commanders on April 16, Watters spoke of the conflict being 'confined largely on the morning of the 16th to Vitez and was just a major fallout in Vitez and a little bit of Kruscica...'¹¹¹

Col. Stewart was at times no less vague than his Second in Command, particularly in relation to his own movements and observations on April

¹⁰⁸ Blaskic trial, op.cit. *ICTY*, p.3439 and 3549.

¹⁰⁹ Kupreskic trial, *ICTY*, August 18, 1998.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.5705-6.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p.5708.

16. Summoned as a Trial Chamber witness at the Blaskic trial, and later testifying at the Kordic trial, Stewart's evidence was also somewhat at variance with that of other witnesses. Denying having been informed that his soldiers had discovered a large number of bodies in Ahmici on April 16, Stewart commented

They wouldn't have bothered mentioning it...it was irrelevant...to what we were doing. We were just flat out. So they didn't tell me, no...¹¹²

Questioned on whether the soldiers had informed him that they had stacked up a number of dead bodies by the cemetery, he replied:

I recall that they were operating in the area; I don't recall exactly what they told me about bodies..."¹¹³

When asked to confirm that he had in fact passed by Ahmici on the morning of the massacre, when his soldiers would have been there, Stewart stressed that they were 'not in the main part of it, just on the edge'.¹¹⁴ This conflicted with the evidence of Woolley and Kujawinski whose units had driven through the village at different times, Woolley's unit spending some four hours there.

The local ECMM monitors and others were also aware of atrocities in Ahmici before April 22. Hendrik Morsink, a colonel in the Dutch army, who began work as an ECMM monitor in Central Bosnia on April 16, testified that

¹¹² Kordic trial, *ICTY*, p.12411. Stewart volunteered the fact that he did not necessarily read the Milinfosums, where such information could have been found. Kordic trial, 2000, *Ibid.* p.12325. Interestingly, many accounts of the Ahmici massacre, including from otherwise competent analysts, were confused as to when the event had occurred. SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* p.329, put the discovery as being on 19 April, while TANNER, *op.cit.* p.289, quotes Stewart as concluding that the attack took place on 22 April. In fact, Stewart in his book wrote that it was 'after 5 o'clock one morning'.

¹¹³ Kordic trial, 2000, *ICTY*, p.12410.

¹¹⁴ Kordic trial, 2000, *ICTY*, p.12410.

members of the local commission mentioned the name of the village several times. I was only in theatre for one day then, so I might have not realised the importance of Ahmici, but after mentioning the name that often, we decided on the 20th to visit it, and we finally did on the 21st because it was too busy on the 20th...I heard somebody speaking about Ahmici on the 17th of April, and we drove by Ahmici ourselves when I came from Zenica to Vitez, and there were dead bodies on the road that very morning.¹¹⁵

A report of Morsink's visit was sent to the ECMM headquarters.¹¹⁶ In the confusion of April 16 where hostilities erupted suddenly along the Lasva valley, amidst efforts to minimise the backlash from the Totic kidnapping in Zenica the previous day, it was perhaps understandable that the degree of atrocity at Ahmici should escape the immediate notice of the BritBat commander and his senior officers. No explanation has to date emerged, however, for the six day delay in discovering a massacre already known to locals and other international officials. Interestingly, in the subsequent reporting of the Ahmici massacre, despite its graphic exposure, this anomaly was not discussed. On the other hand, there was evidence of tight media control, as the consistent misnaming of the village demonstrated.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Blaskic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.24415-6.

¹¹⁶ Morsink visited Ahmici on April 21 as part of his duties on the Busovaca Joint Commission, together with a British liaison officer and others, and walked around Ahmici for 20-30 minutes, but was warned by the British soldiers not to enter any of the houses due to possible mines. Blaskic trial, 1999, *Ibid.* p.24397. Commander Stewart, on the other hand, visiting Ahmici on April 22, noted in his memoirs that he judged the danger from mines and booby-traps 'probably negligible'. STEWART, *op.cit.* p.295.

¹¹⁷ The village was referred to as 'Ahinici' instead of 'Ahmici' in the following newspapers: *Guardian*, April 23, 1993, *Independent*, April 24, 1993, p.13, *Sunday Times*, April 25, 1993, p.2 & 17, *The Times*, April 26, 1993, p.10, April 27, p.12 & April 28, p.11, *European*, April 29-May 2, 1993, p.2, *Scotsman*, April 28, 1993, p.1, *Evening Standard*, June 8, 1993, p.9, *Guardian*, June 17, 1993. For an outside view of the British role in these events, see interview with Giorgio Rossetti, Member of the European Parliament, in *Danas*, July 30, 1993, p.44-46. Many British news reports on the Bosnian war came from Vitez. BBC journalist Martin Bell records 'I think we probably spent too much time rolling along in the dust or mud...behind British armoured vehicles in Central Bosnia. They had little impact on the principal conflict between Bosnian government forces...and the Serbs...' BELL, Martin. *In Harm's Way*. Hamish Hamilton, 1995, p.151.

The discovery of the Ahmici massacre changed the international perception of the Bosnian war almost overnight. The world-wide publicity generated by the massacre's exposure seemed to confirm the thesis of an equivalence of guilt between Serbs and Croats, and was further compounded by Stewart's personal reaction, in condemning "the bloody HVO" before BBC and ITV cameras, and in later interviews.¹¹⁸ To blame the Croats publicly before the world media at that stage, without a full investigation into the atrocity, would normally have been considered a violation of the UN impartiality rules. On this occasion, however, Stewart was depicted in the media as a highly-proficient commander whose heart had momentarily ruled his head, but in extenuating circumstances.¹¹⁹

Before leaving for Bosnia, Stewart had received a briefing from the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Peter Inge, to the effect that 'the hatred generated between the opposing factions was almost impossible to believe...' and that 'historically, relations between Serbs, Croats and Muslims had been appalling for centuries... the place had always been considered a powder keg.'¹²⁰ While some historical enmity had existed in Bosnia, the erroneous view that it was responsible for the current conflict gradually seeped into the mindset of the Cheshire Regiment which had, reportedly, become virulently anti-Croat.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ 'I don't think it was Muslims and I don't think it was Serbs'. Bob Stewart, quoted in *Scotsman*, April 28, 1993, p.1.

¹¹⁹ The 'dedication and commitment' of Col. Stewart and his soldiers were acknowledged by the Foreign Secretary the following week at the House of Commons. *Bosnia, Hansard*, April 29, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.223, c.1169, and *The Times*, May 12, 1993, p.10.

¹²⁰ Quoted by Col. Stewart in the Kordic trial, 2000, *ICTY*, p.12322-3.

¹²¹ Kent-Payne, a commissioned officer in The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment which had arrived in Bosnia just days earlier, noted that the Cheshires' 'hatred of the Croats was vehement...I wondered whether we would get like this and they simply appeared to be following the lead of their CO [commanding officer].' KENT-PAYNE, Major Vaughan. *Bosnia Warriors*. Hale, 1998, p.63. Yet, as Martin Bell commented, 'Most British soldiers, like most British journalists, never actually met a Serb from start to finish.' BELL. op.cit. p.151.

A further associated consequence of the episode was that the Cheshire Regiment received an unexpected boost in a reprieve from its scheduled extinction, an outcome Col. Stewart had reportedly worked for resolutely.¹²² Stewart published his memoirs immediately after his tour at the request of the Ministry of Defence public relations office, his conclusions towards the end of the book for the most part echoing the British government position.¹²³ Stewart admitted he was given little guidance in his mandate, but portrayed this as a positive factor.¹²⁴ In the week after the massacre, considerable time was devoted during the BritBat daily briefings to discussion on securing extensive media coverage for the Cheshire Regiment in the removal to a zoo in Split of a local bear the troops had been looking after, a story no doubt aimed at capturing the imagination of the British public, and engendering support for the British troops in Central Bosnia at a time of pressure worldwide for international intervention against the Serbs. The story reportedly took precedence over a briefing on the situation in the Posavina corridor, an area where Croats and Bosnian government forces still presented a united front against the Bosnian Serb army.¹²⁵

There was no full investigation into the Ahmici massacre, such as was carried out by NordBat after the Stupni Do killings.¹²⁶ The investigation

¹²² See *Bosnia*, April 29, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.223, c.1170, and KENT-PAYNE, *Ibid*.

¹²³ 'Bosnia is undergoing a classic civil war fought by civilians against civilians', and 'Hunger and cold were the enemies we went into Bosnia to tackle, and I think we succeeded'. STEWART, *op.cit.* pp.319 & 323-4.

¹²⁴ Stewart reportedly told Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind on his visit to Bosnia that he had no problem with the mandate. STEWART, *Ibid.* p.317. Major Vaughan Kent-Payne had a different view. 'We did what we could but were constantly hampered by the mandate and the lack of a clear statement of exactly what we were there to do. We did not have the backing, or teeth, to peacekeep ...Most of the time, we were powerless to stop the killing and the standing of the UN fell to an all-time low'. KENT-PAYNE, *op.cit.* p.352-3.

¹²⁵ Major Kent-Payne, present at the briefing, describes how, when the sergeant showed persistence in wishing to appraise those present, including their successors from the Prince of Wales Regiment, on the situation in Posavina, Col. Stewart pulled a gun on him. KENT-PAYNE, *Ibid.* p.68-9.

¹²⁶ Kordic trial, 2000, *ICTY*, p.13603.

by a two-person team despatched by the UN Centre for Human Rights 'because of the tremendous media attention being given to the events in the Lasva Valley region...' was confined to Ahmici and Miletici, due to limited time and funding, and the narrow remit of the mission.¹²⁷ The team also worked closely with BritBat. One team member, Payam Akhavan, testified that 'our methodology was largely to try and speak as often as possible with members of the British battalion.'¹²⁸ Another brief investigation was carried out by the EC Monitoring Mission, headed by Charles McLeod, who testified to a number of briefings from BritBat.¹²⁹ He had not, however, been informed of the kidnapping of the Croat military commander Totic, and the murder of his four bodyguards the day before the Ahmici massacre, a curious omission in light of Stewart's view that 'the cause of the violence was probably Totic's kidnapping'.¹³⁰

The Ahmici massacre occurred in the final month of the first BritBat UNPROFOR mission to Bosnia. The Vitez area, at peace when the mission arrived, became the centre of hostilities. The delivery of aid, the main declared aim of the mandate, was becoming increasingly difficult.¹³¹ The UN presence in Bosnia had not prevented ethnic cleansing and slaughter, as BritBat troops not infrequently found

¹²⁷ Payam Akhavan, Blaskic trial, *ICTY*, p.5276. Only two officers were available to investigate human rights abuses throughout Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. p.5294.

¹²⁸ The UN team flew by UNPROFOR air transport to the base at Kiseljak where they were met by members of the British battalion, and taken to the British base at Vitez. 'We would spend a lot of time during lunch, during dinner in informal discussions with soldiers as well as commanders to get a better idea of what the overall situation was in the Lasva Valley region...' Payam Akhavan, Blaskic trial, *ICTY*, p.5278.

¹²⁹ Blaskic trial, 1998, *ICTY*, p.6403.

¹³⁰ STEWART, *op.cit.* p.282, and Kordic trial, 1999, *ICTY*, p.4687-8.

¹³¹ Brian Watters of the Cheshire Regiment opined 'we no longer really could effectively distribute aid...the distribution of aid was less and less relevant'. Blaskic trial, August 17, 1998, p.146. According to Major Kent-Payne of the Prince of Wales Regiment, 'the fact that few, if any, people actually starved to death in Bosnia was only partially due to the UN. Aid reached the country from other sources...' KENT-PAYNE, *op.cit.* p.353. See also MENDILUCE, *op.cit.* for the compromising position in which UNHCR was placed in face of the ethnic cleansing process.

themselves forced with the stark choice between 'assisting' in the ethnic cleansing process and bearing witness to massacre. Increasing numbers of soldiers now felt that the arms embargo should be lifted to allow the Bosnian government forces to defend themselves, or that the UN mandate should include a combat role, for which the British troops were well equipped.¹³²

The extension of full-scale war to Central Bosnia following the massacre appeared to vindicate those who insisted it was a *civil* war, involving all three communities,¹³³ and attributed the break-up of Yugoslavia to 'centuries of ethnic hatred', and to validate the UNPROFOR humanitarian mandate. Indeed, shortly afterwards, the US 'lift-and-strike' proposal was put on indefinite hold, as Britain's non-interventionist policy became more widely regarded as the most prudent option in a theatre where all the 'warring factions' were perceived to be locked into senseless internecine conflict.

The massacre both epitomized and compounded the failure of the UNPROFOR mission in Central Bosnia. The fact that senior British officers, despite having access to information about large-scale atrocities at Ahmici within hours of their occurrence, failed to uncover the massacre for six days, underlined starkly the inefficacy of the mission. Government ministers, however, maximized the horror of the event itself, and focused on the role of British forces in 'bringing relief from the suffering'.¹³⁴

¹³² The Cheshire regiment had 51 Warriors (a 30-ton armoured fighting vehicle), and a substantial number of Scimitars. Brian Watters, Kordic trial, 1999. *ICTY*, p.5782-3.

¹³³ Douglas Hurd, *Bosnia*, April 19, 1993, op.cit. c.30, and Dennis Skinner, *Ibid.* c.31.

¹³⁴ Douglas Hurd, *Bosnia*, April 29, 1993, op.cit. c.1170.

The extensive publicity which ensued from Ahmici encouraged many observers to draw a symmetry of guilt between the parties.¹³⁵ Yet Croat ultra-nationalism, like its Serb counterpart, was sustained and nurtured by international policy, and particularly the Vance-Owen Plan. The deliberate appeasement of Bosnian Croat nationalists through inequitable territorial division under the Vance-Owen Plan may have secured their unconditional acceptance, but it also exacerbated tensions between the Bosniac and Croat communities already under pressure from a burgeoning refugee population, and encouraged Croat leaders, acting on the strength of the provisions of the VOPP, to pursue policies akin to those of their Serb counterparts.¹³⁶ British UNPROFOR leaders, too, in interpreting the mandate in its narrowest sense, in failing to act earlier despite a number of warnings,¹³⁷ and in their handling of the Ahmici atrocity, confirmed to Croat nationalists that aggression, as with the Serbs, would be met with impunity. This led to reprisals on the Bosniac side and, soon afterwards, full-scale war between erstwhile allies. Ironically, the Ahmici incident brought few dividends to the Croats. The British Foreign Secretary led the call for sanctions to be imposed on Croatia, and a subsequent Bosnian Army counter-offensive resulted in significant loss of territory in Central Bosnia for the Croats.

The British UNPROFOR mission did not, in its presence, help to allay local antagonisms. On the contrary, during its six-month tour, the Cheshire Regiment witnessed a sharp escalation of hostilities in their

¹³⁵ This included many MPs. Harold Elletson, *Written Answers, Hansard*, May 17 & 20, 1993, Robert Wareing, *Written Answers*, June 16, 1993, and David Faber, *Written Answers*, May 21, 1995. All had visited Serb-held areas of Bosnia at the Serb expense. *Register of Members' Interests*, 1993. Douglas Hurd, *Bosnia*, April 29, 1993, op.cit. c.1169. *Guardian*, Letter to the Editor, from Fred Eckhard, Lord Owen's Spokesperson at the ICFY, June 14, 1993

¹³⁶ Even so, both Bosniac and Croat commanders in Travnik, Lt. Col. Meho Alagic and Col. Filip Filipovic, despite their differences, argued for a joint army to oppose the Serbs who had, until early 1993, regularly shelled Travnik. *The Times*, April 29, 1993, p.13.

¹³⁷ On April 15, following the Totic episode in Zenica, Captain Dundas-Whatley warned the British UN Command that hostilities were also likely to erupt in Vitez if precautionary measures, such as placing Warriors in the town centre, were not taken. According to Dundas-Whatley, the warning was not heeded. Blaskic trial, 1998, *ICTY*, p.14070.

area of deployment, resulting in an eleven-month full-scale war between HVO forces and the Bosnian army, which ended only through a US-brokered agreement in March 1994, in which Britain played no discernible role. There was little if any evidence of long-standing ethnic hatred between the communities in Central Bosnia when the Cheshire Regiment arrived. Indeed, a substantial number of Bosniacs had fought in support of Croatian troops in the 1991 war against the Serbs and, in 1995, the Bosnian Army and the HVO joined forces in the Krajina region, successfully lifting the siege of Bihac and other areas of Northern Bosnia. Yet the briefing given to the British commander by the Chief of Staffs became virtually a self-fulfilling prophecy during the first BritBat mission in central Bosnia, and may have contributed to the mutual lack of trust and respect between the British soldiers and the communities they were mandated to assist.

The declared mandate of the UNPROFOR mission, to escort humanitarian aid and save lives, became increasingly difficult to fulfill after mid April 1993. The Ahmici massacre spurred the Bosnian Army to retaliate against the HVO along the Lasva Valley, resulting in huge loss of life on both sides, bringing aid convoys to Tuzla to a complete halt, with the result that one of Bosnia's most industrialized cities, which had managed to maintain its multi-ethnic character, was left for nearly a year with very limited food and medical supplies, as the HVO and Croat irregulars blocked the aid routes.¹³⁸ British UNPROFOR commanders, for the most part, chose to interpret their mandate narrowly, even to the point of refusing shelter to Bosnian refugees shelled outside the British base and, on occasion, assisting in the ethnic cleansing process from Serb-held areas.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ By January 1994, out of an estimated monthly food requirement of 7,425 MT, only 1,837 MT was delivered to Tuzla. *UN Information Notes*, February 1994, p.17.

¹³⁹ In May 1993, the Institute of Strategic Studies issued a damning indictment of international handling of the Bosnian conflict, particularly the deployment of UN peacekeepers, which was described as 'a costly mistake', undermining the credibility of the UN, and incapable of ending the

It was vital to the British government that the UNPROFOR mission continue since, if the main purpose of the mission, namely, to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, was no longer possible to fulfill, then the question of UN withdrawal would arise, with the concomitant obligation (especially on the part of Britain and France, the main supporters of the UNPROFOR mission) to consider the alternatives. With the safety of UN troops no longer an issue, and in the absence of a viable alternative, there would have been no valid reason to maintain the arms embargo, or to oppose strategic air strikes targeted at Serb positions. The wisdom of deploying UN troops on a mission which rapidly proved unviable would also bring the whole British-led policy of 'escorted aid' into question and, perhaps, British policy in Bosnia overall.

The Bosniac-Croat conflict was a tragedy for moderates on all sides, but a triumph for the forces of nationalism, both in military and propaganda terms as, from Spring 1993 onwards, the whole ethos of the war became increasingly confused in the public perception. The proponents of the 'civil war' theory were, for the time being, vindicated and, henceforth, the international political circus moved towards a more overt containment policy.

House of Commons Adjournment Debate: Bosnia

On April 29, the first extended debate on Bosnia was held at the behest of the Labour Party, lasting over five hours. Opening the debate, the Foreign Secretary described what he called the 'swirl of violence [which] is sometimes hard for us to piece together'.¹⁴⁰ Defending British

Bosnian war. Strategic Survey, 1992-93, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, quoted in *Guardian*, May 20, 1993, p.10.

¹⁴⁰ Douglas Hurd, *Bosnia*, April 29, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.223, c.1169.

government opposition to the US air strikes proposals, Douglas Hurd stated

We should not pretend that, from outside, we can ensure a solution. Even a prolonged military commitment by the international community could not guarantee that.¹⁴¹

Other than a passing mention of the 'outrageous Serb attacks on the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica', the Foreign Secretary did not condemn the offensive, nor propose a punitive response, beyond tighter sanctions. Referring to the recent Bosniac/Croat clashes in Central Bosnia, Hurd drew a symmetry of guilt, opining that "no side has the monopoly on evil,"¹⁴² and advocating persuasion backed by sanctions pressure.¹⁴³ For the first time Hurd admitted the fragility of the Vance/Owen plan, which he now referred to as a 'process' stating, with some unintended irony, that 'the worst of all worlds would be half-measures in Bosnia which salved consciences without saving lives'.¹⁴⁴ Misleadingly, he suggested that the international community was united in its Bosnia policy, and stressed that UN forces should not, and could not, 'fight their way into designated areas'.¹⁴⁵

Labour Foreign Affairs spokesperson John Cunningham broadly endorsed the government position, also suggesting moral equivalence:

¹⁴¹ Ibid. c.1170. However, as an expert witness to the Foreign Affairs Committee pointed out: 'At the moment we have the phenomenon of the key Security Council powers insisting on the one hand that they cannot alone do everything and on the other hand refusing to proceed to those intended Charter provisions which would ensure that others too have a role to play in collective security under Chapter VII...For one or two states to carry nearly all the burden guarantees that they retain control. But it also guarantees that collective security can only be patchily provided.' HIGGINS, Professor Rosalyn, QC. Memorandum submitted to The Foreign Affairs Committee, February 17 1993, p.178.

¹⁴² Ibid. c.1169.

¹⁴³ Ibid. c.1172.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. c.1176.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. c.1174-6. This comment ignored the Bosnian insistence that foreign ground troops were unnecessary since the removal of the arms embargo would enable them to defend themselves. See comment by Bosnian Foreign Minister in a visit to London, quoted by John Cunningham. Ibid. c.1182.

The reality is that among the political leaders as well as among the military leaders in Bosnia there are no innocents. They all bear a grave responsibility for continuing the slaughter in the way they do.¹⁴⁶

Questioned on the air strikes option, Cunningham quoted a call two weeks earlier by Labour leader John Smith for an ultimatum to Serbia that 'unless a ceasefire is made effective, the United Nations will authorise air strikes against Serbian lines of communication in Bosnia-Herzegovina.'¹⁴⁷ Quoting the Labour leader's words verbatim, and then only on questioning, demonstrated Cunningham's own lack of confidence in that position, and possibly a degree of disarray at that point on the Labour front bench.

Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown viewed the problem as

Europe's failure...[and] a particular failure of Britain. We had the duty of leadership through our presidency, in the key months of the campaign.¹⁴⁸

In his own alternative proposals, however, Ashdown demonstrated some confused thinking, thereby rendering himself the butt of government ridicule whenever he spoke on Bosnia.

I believe that we can go in for protective intervention...we can establish the safe havens for which many of us have been calling for so long...¹⁴⁹

If the Vance Owen plan fails...Muslim enclaves could be declared a UN protectorate and the UN, on behalf of the Muslims, could negotiate with all the authority of the international community behind it, with the Serbs and Croats to establish safe, just and

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. c.1180.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. c.1183.

¹⁴⁸ Paddy Ashdown, Ibid. c.1193.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. c.1197.

secure borders. After that, it would be for the UN to support that state until, in due course, it would achieve self-determination and the capacity for self defence.¹⁵⁰

Ashdown did not explain, however, how a virtual ghetto, inhabited by sick, undernourished and war-wounded captives could achieve 'self determination and the capacity for self defence', given the UN track record thus far. His proposal was summarily dismissed by the Defence Secretary:

...the 150 troops in Srebrenica are there only by the consent of the Serbian forces, who allow them to enter the city...[W]ithout a vast increase in the number of forces on the ground, and without a commitment of the kind that would last many years and risk massive casualties, [the Liberal leader] is setting out a proposal that is impractical and unrealistic.¹⁵¹

Malcolm Rifkind had, perhaps unwittingly, exposed the unworkable nature of safe havens in the Bosnian context, at least in terms of protecting the inhabitants. Nonetheless, some three weeks later the 'safe areas' policy was endorsed through the Joint Action Programme, with British approval.

The misleading information conveyed to the House by the Foreign Secretary, and the weak performances of the two main opposition party leaders, was compounded by tendentious and inaccurate contributions from MPs such as Robert Wareing, then regarded as an expert on the Balkans due to his frequent visits to the area, who stated that 'the Muslims are Serbs', 'Bosnia...is not a state but a province', and 'more than 60 per cent of the land in Bosnia-Herzegovina was owned by Serbian people when the conflict started',¹⁵² a line adopted by Serb

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. c.1201.

¹⁵¹ Malcolm Rifkind, Ibid. c.1249-50. The Liberal Leader's position was also later criticised by Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg as being 'unsustainable and that it varies: it is difficult to identify'. Yugoslavia, July 26, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.229, c.873.

¹⁵² Robert Wareing, Bosnia, April 29, 1993, Ibid. c.1233, and Yugoslavia, July 26, 1993, Ibid. c.868.

leader Radovan Karadzic, and later by David Owen. On the other hand, approximately two thirds of the speakers from all sides of the House disagreed strongly with some or all of the government's Bosnia policy,¹⁵³ a fact which the Foreign Secretary who, despite his assertion that 'the views of the House must weigh heavily with us as we continue to consult with our allies',¹⁵⁴ apparently ignored since, in reference to the debate two weeks later, he declared

I carried away with me the very strong feeling from all parts of the House, although not from all individuals, that hon. Members were in favour of the pressures that we are building up and of the line that we are taking and that they were also in favour of substantial prudence before going into further types of involvement without calculating the consequences.¹⁵⁵

Since there was not the opportunity to vote on the issue, the Foreign Secretary's statement went unchallenged.

The Joint Action Programme

At a Foreign Ministers' meeting in Washington on May 22, the US, Russia, Britain, France and Spain agreed to a joint strategy to 'contain' the Bosnian conflict and guard the UN 'safe areas' under siege by Serb forces. Known as the Joint Action Programme (JAP), or the Washington Agreement, it was a minimalist approach to bridge the divergent positions of major world powers, following the Serb rejection of the Vance Owen Peace Plan. Most Western analysts considered it a *de facto*

¹⁵³ This included senior Conservative MPs. Former Defence Secretary Tom King called the failure to back up UN resolutions with a military threat, while giving advance warning of the intention not to do so, 'profoundly unwise', and the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, David Howell, admitted to a change of view on Bosnia, pointing out that denying one of the combatants access to heavy arms already constituted direct intervention, and that further action would be needed to prevent greater involvement at a later stage. Ibid. c.1203-4 and 1207-1210.

¹⁵⁴ Douglas Hurd, Ibid. c.1169.

¹⁵⁵ Douglas Hurd, Oral Questions, 12 May 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.224.

recognition of the status quo in Bosnia, freezing the territorial outcome of 14 months of war, since it offered no real protection to the communities under siege in eastern Bosnia, and emboldened Serb and Croat nationalists in their objective of partitioning Bosnia at the expense of its Muslim citizens. The JAP was, not surprisingly, accepted by the Serbs as representing 'a more realistic approach' by the West, and interpreted as justifying Serb opposition to the VOPP. It came under severe criticism, however, from many in Europe, including the Germans, Dutch and Italians, the Danish EC Presidency, the president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, European Commissioner for External Affairs, Hans Van den Broek, and UN Human Rights Rapporteur, Tadeusz Mazowiecki.¹⁵⁶ The non-aligned countries and the Organisation of Islamic States also opposed the JAP, as well as Owen himself who had been omitted from the negotiations preceding it.¹⁵⁷

This section focuses on UN Security Council, parliamentary and public reaction to the Joint Action Programme, and Britain's role in its ratification.

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The rejection of the Vance-Owen Plan by the self-styled Bosnian Serb Assembly on May 6 had signaled, for most international leaders, the need for a new political initiative in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁵⁸ Lord Owen himself had been endeavouring for some weeks to begin implementation of the VOPP 'where possible', as he put it, which given the Serb referendum result and the imbalance of weaponry on the ground

¹⁵⁶ See OWEN, *op.cit.* p.175 and *Independent*, May 26, 1993, p.11.

¹⁵⁷ OWEN, p.172-3.

¹⁵⁸ A referendum was held by the Bosnian Serbs on May 15-16, where 96% of voters were reportedly in favour of rejecting the VOPP and establishing a Serb state. *Keesings Record of World Events*, May 1993, p.39470.

implicitly excluded Serb-held areas.¹⁵⁹ In a memorandum to the Foreign Office Political Director on May 13, Owen advised that the Bosnian Serb referendum should be downplayed internationally, with emphasis shifted to UN sanctions against the *Bosnian Serbs*, as opposed to Serbia itself.¹⁶⁰ Owen blamed the failure of the VOPP on the Clinton administration for not fully endorsing it through the Security Council, and for supposedly authorizing a New York Times report, which announced that the VOPP had been laid aside.¹⁶¹

The concept of 'safe areas' for Bosnia-Herzegovina had first been introduced at the 1992 London Conference by the President of the International Red Cross, Dr Cornelio Sommaruga, and supported by Austria, then a non-permanent member of the Security Council, but was considered impossible to implement without the consent of all the parties. The Serbs were unlikely to agree to any initiative which limited their objectives, while the Bosnian government would oppose any proposal which did not guarantee the protection of the civilian population within the enclaves. The UN Force Commander considered that protecting the 'safe areas' was a job for a 'combat-capable, peace-enforcement operation', incompatible with peacekeeping.¹⁶² Developments on the ground, however, demanded an immediate response.¹⁶³

Following lengthy debate within the Security Council, members of the Non-Aligned Caucus, led by Venezuela, proposed action to reverse the

¹⁵⁹ See OWEN, *op.cit.* Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁰ Memorandum from Lord Owen in New York to Political Director, UK FCO. COREU CD93E13.PAR, May 13, 1993. Interestingly, Owen's approach was to Britain rather than the EC Presidency in Denmark, to whom he was officially responsible.

¹⁶¹ OWEN, *op.cit.* p.170.

¹⁶² *Srebrenica Report*, *op.cit.* p.15/51.

¹⁶³ In acknowledgement of this, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, wrote to the Secretary-General on April 2 that either the UN should protect Srebrenica with 'life-sustaining assistance' on a scale much greater than hitherto permitted, or the population should be evacuated.

Serb aggression, and lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government. A mission to Srebrenica on April 25, led by Diego Arria the Venezuelan representative to assess the situation there, concluded that the 'safe area' needed to be greatly expanded, and that other towns should also be declared safe areas, requiring an extended UNPROFOR presence, a revised mandate and different rules of engagement, with military enforcement measures, in the case of non-compliance by the Serbs. On May 15, at a new round of Security Council negotiations, three separate responses emerged. A memorandum by the Non-Aligned Caucus argued that the 'safe areas' concept would fail unless the security of those areas was guaranteed and protected by UNPROFOR:

The failure of the international community to use enforcement measures, or to use the threat of such enforcement measures, would inevitably lead to a much more substantial use of force in the future...We have all learned the most important lesson in this conflict: that the international community will not be respected until it decides to take effective actions.¹⁶⁴

The memorandum also stated that, despite being established under Chapter VII, the UNPROFOR mandate had been narrowly interpreted, its focus limited to the provision of aid, and only then with the consent of the perpetrators of the aggression. That, and the denial of Bosnia's inherent right to invoke Article 51 of the Charter, concluded the Non-Aligned Caucus, had encouraged the Serbs to pursue their aggression.¹⁶⁵

France also wrote a memorandum to the Secretary-General on May 19, outlining changes necessary to the UNPROFOR mandate

to give it, more clearly than in resolution 824, the task of ensuring the security of the safe areas. To this end a new resolution should provide explicitly for the possibility of recourse to the [use of] force, by all necessary means.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p.19/71.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p.19/72.

The French ambassador outlined three options for consideration:

- (a) a light option without formed units;
- (b) a light option with formed units; and
- (c) a heavy option.

While France expressed preference for the second option, Britain and Russia insisted on the light option which required few more troops than were already on the ground.¹⁶⁷ Option (a), the light option, was later adopted on May 22 by the Security Council by representatives of the governments of France, Britain, Russia, Spain and the United States in Washington, in a 'Joint Action Programme', later to become a highly controversial policy. The Programme was strongly opposed by the two Security Council members representing the Non-Aligned Caucus, and subsequently came under heavy censure from the House of Commons, the media and the general public, as well as from other EC member states, omitted from the decision-making process.

The JAP was ratified in Security Council resolution 836, adopted on June 4, with 13 votes in favour and 2 abstentions (Venezuela and Pakistan). The voting pattern, however, was not a clear reflection of the positions of the various Security Council members, a number of whom pointed out the fundamental shortcomings of the JAP, and the difficulty of implementing it without significant further resources. Others took a wider interpretation of UNSCR 836, supporting it on the understanding that force in the form of air strikes would be used in the case of continued Serb aggression in and around the safe areas.¹⁶⁸ The Hungarian representative considered it addressed the symptoms rather than 'the key issue...in the Bosnian conflict: reversing the results of the

¹⁶⁷ *Le Monde*, May 21, 1993, p.3.

¹⁶⁸ *Srebrenica Report*, p.21/ 81.

aggression which has been carried out with impunity...'¹⁶⁹ The United States, too, despite being one of the co-sponsors of the Resolution, made it clear that it had endorsed the JAP merely as an interim measure to save lives, while keeping options open for 'new and tougher measures', adding 'my Government's view of what those tougher measures should be has not changed'.¹⁷⁰ The United Kingdom representative spoke positively about the Joint Action Programme and, while not ruling out 'other, stronger measures as the situation develops', described the safe area policy as 'an essential step in the immediate agenda' of the Programme, and pledged to assist the Security Council to find more troops, including from Islamic States.¹⁷¹

Owen argues in his memoirs that Britain was an unwilling partner in the JAP, succumbing to pressure from Russia and, particularly, the United States. This is not borne out by news reporting at the time, however.¹⁷² As the JAP was being agreed in Washington, President Clinton expressed doubts about what he termed as the 'Russian/European' plan to 'stabilise' the military situation.¹⁷³ The United States also rejected the Russian/British proposal for the 'progressive' implementation of the Vance Owen Plan, judging it to be 'totally unrealistic'.¹⁷⁴

Differences also arose as to the wording of the requisite resolution confirming the 'safe areas' policy, the number of troops needed to

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.p.23/ 90.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.p.23/ 88.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p.23/91.

¹⁷² See, for instance, *The Times*, May 21, 1993.

¹⁷³ *Le Monde*, May 23-24, 1993, pp.1 & 3.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. Following agreement on the Joint Action Programme, the Russian newspapers *Komsomolskaia Pravda* and *Izvestia*, which had hitherto carried little coverage of the Bosnian war, declared the JAP a victory of Russian diplomacy. *Le Monde*, May 26, 1993, p.4.

implement it, and the mandate. Shortly after its adoption, the UN Secretariat stated that approximately 32,000 additional ground troops would be required to implement the 'safe areas'. This drew strong opposition, particularly from the United Kingdom representative who favoured the minimalist option, insisting that no more than 5,000 troops would be needed, basing his argument on the 'positive' example of Srebrenica, where a small Canadian contingent was based.¹⁷⁵ Douglas Hurd noted in his memoirs that he had instructed David Hannay, the British Ambassador to the UN, to 'water down the phrasing of the motion so that it carried less of an unrealistic commitment.'¹⁷⁶ This decision was to have crucial consequences two years later in Srebrenica.

The Non-Aligned Caucus then tabled a draft resolution to exempt the Bosnian government from the arms embargo, linking it to what they perceived as the flawed concept underlying UNSC Resolution 836. The Caucus argued that, since the Security Council was unable to take action to protect the civilian population, or to halt the conflict, the Bosnian government should have the means of self defence. The resolution was rejected by six votes in favour to none against, and nine abstentions. The United States was amongst those who supported the resolution. The UK representative led the opposition to the draft resolution.¹⁷⁷

After the fall of Srebrenica in 1995, the 'safe areas' policy was acknowledged by many leading players, including British government

¹⁷⁵ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.24/ 95. Douglas Hurd later claimed that Britain had encouraged other countries, including Iranians to contribute to the UN force. HURD, Douglas. *Memoirs*. Little, Brown, 2003, p.464. The Islamic countries, including Iran, had in fact offered 18,000 troops for the 'safe areas' but were rejected by the Secretary-General. French UN troops were already present in large numbers in the 'safe areas' of Sarajevo and Bihac. British troops would not consider any deployment for its troops other than Central Bosnia. *NIOD*, op.cit. Chapter 11, No.12.

¹⁷⁶ HURD, 2003, op.cit. p.463.

¹⁷⁷ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.24-25/99 and 102. In late June, 1993, the UN General Assembly voted to lift the arms embargo from the Bosnian government by 109 votes to 57. *NIOD*, op.cit. Part 1, Chapter 12, No.2.

ministers, as one of the main errors in the international community's policy on Bosnia.¹⁷⁸ Only in retrospect did Douglas Hurd acknowledge that substantially more troops would have been required, commenting that 'in the absence of extra troops the safe areas resolution...was a bluff which...could easily be called'.¹⁷⁹ At the time, it was argued that insufficient troops were on offer. Later, Hurd claimed that the Iranians had been encouraged to contribute troops.¹⁸⁰

The Joint Action Programme also included an agreement on sealing the border between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, to ensure Bosnian Serb compliance with the peace process. With the demise of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, Lord Owen sought a new *raison d'être* for the ICFY (and a new role for himself) in assisting with the border monitoring. However, since Milosevic would not at the time agree to international monitors,¹⁸¹ the initiative proved little more than a sop to public opinion, and was abandoned, and only resuscitated in late 1994.¹⁸²

Following the announcement of the Joint Action Programme, opposition to the new government policy orientation on Bosnia was self-evident in the House of Commons. Labour European affairs spokesperson, George Robertson summed up the mood of the House:

¹⁷⁸ HURD, *op.cit.* p.463. Owen's view was that the 'safe areas' concept failed mainly because 'the UN Security Council was allowing the Muslims to evade any demilitarization provision'. OWEN, *op.cit.* p.200.

¹⁷⁹ 'I should have backed my own scepticism at the time and held back the French from letting rhetoric outrun reality'. HURD, *op.cit.* p.464.

¹⁸⁰ HURD, *Ibid.* p.464. Islamic countries in fact offered to send 17,000 soldiers to join the UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic rejected the offer, however, in a letter to the UN Secretary-General. Since the British government had consistently reiterated it would only introduce measures acceptable to all parties, Douglas Hurd's retrospective claim that the Iranians had been encouraged to contribute is dubious.

¹⁸¹ *Le Monde*, May 20, 1993, p.4.

¹⁸² The border monitoring concept was again considered by Milosevic in late 1994, when the Serbs were under renewed pressure, following their rejection of the Contact Group plan.

...such a radical and fundamental new policy shift on Bosnia should have merited a full government statement and not just a reply to a private notice question...Will it not simply be seen as a cleverly constructed and diplomatically phrased climbdown in the face of the Bosnian Serb rejection of their leader's signature on the Vance Owen plan three weeks ago in Athens? ...Is this the end of that plan, which was for a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina? ...Will the Minister tell us about the new proposed safe areas? For whom are they to be safe? It appears that civilians in those areas will be disarmed and any air cover supplied or offered by the United States will be restricted to the UN troops in the areas...is not the proposal just a recipe for creating five or more new permanent refugee camps? What is meant by 'sealing the borders of Bosnia' when all it seems to amount to is what the communique says: 'We are watching to see if the border closure is effective?' How does that stand, especially in the light of Mr Milosevic's apparent statement that there will be a veto on all foreign observers and monitors on the border?...¹⁸³

This raised fundamental issues relating to the government's Balkans policy. The Foreign Minister retorted that

it is important to keep in mind the fact that those on [the Labour] Front Bench and those on this one agree on one thing - that it would be wrong to deploy UK or any other ground troops in a combat role. Certain consequences flow from that, and they are set out in the Washington agreement...¹⁸⁴

The statement defined the British government position. If Britain and its allies rejected the use of force to compel the Serbs to give up territory gained by force, and if the arms embargo remained in place, the logical consequence was that the Serbs were free to continue, with virtual impunity, to secure more territory by force. The Foreign Minister' rested his case against military intervention mainly on the 'civil war' thesis, which he used repeatedly to parry criticism from Members.

What is going on in Bosnia is, in its principal characteristics, a civil war; and we did not think it right - nor did any other country of which I am aware - to deploy ground troops in a combat role because this war was and is a civil war. Civil wars

¹⁸³ George Robertson, *Bosnia*, *Hansard*, 24 May 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.225, c.571.

¹⁸⁴ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid*.

cannot be resolved by the application of external force..."¹⁸⁵

We must ask ourselves what we are prepared to do in the context of a civil war. Unless we - all nations - are prepared to deploy ground troops in a combat role, perhaps we should not embark on too much bluster..."¹⁸⁶

It is virtually impossible, by the application of external force, to put an end to a civil war..."¹⁸⁷

We are talking about a civil war and the question [to] contemplate is the extent to which British military assets, or any other country's military assets, people, troops and airmen should be used to prevent fighting in a civil war. There is no will in the House for that..."¹⁸⁸

it is primarily a civil war. I do not dispute for one moment that Serbia plays a prominent part in supplying fuel, arms, money and men but it is nevertheless in its essential characteristics a civil war...when one is considering the cost in terms of human lives of trying to make peace by force, one must come to the conclusion that it would take about half a million men."¹⁸⁹

There were over twenty speakers in this brief debate, twelve of whom condemned government policy outright. Only three voiced muted support for the government position.

: : :

The Joint Action Programme was one of the landmarks of the international policy in Bosnia. It was now tacitly acknowledged that there was no provision either for the protection of the Bosnian Muslim population, or for a reversal of territorial gains acquired through 'ethnic

¹⁸⁵ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c.573, in reply to Patrick Cormack.

¹⁸⁶ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c.574, in reply to Max Madden.

¹⁸⁷ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c.576, in reply to David Winnick.

¹⁸⁸ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c. 576-7, in reply to Dale Campbell-Savours.

¹⁸⁹ Douglas Hogg, *Ibid.* c.577, in reply to Sir Terence Higgins. See HAMPSON, Françoise, *op.cit.* for a legal view on the 'civil war' claim.

cleansing', due to lack of international consensus for the use of force. The Joint Action Programme did not contribute to stabilising the situation either. That same week, VRS forces opened a new front at Maglaj.¹⁹⁰

Britain had taken a leading role within the UN Security Council in shaping the Joint Action Programme, endorsing the 'safe areas' policy, and confining the use of air strikes to UN troop protection.¹⁹¹ It had also led in opposing a draft resolution by the Non-Aligned Caucus exempting the Bosnian government from the arms embargo, and argued forcefully for a minimum number of troops to implement the policy, against the advice of the UN Secretariat.

The Owen-Stoltenberg Plan

This section examines the role of Britain, in particular through the work of ICFY co-chair David Owen, in promoting a Serb-inspired ethnic partition plan which, if accepted in its entirety, threatened the survival of the UN sovereign state of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

At the Geneva Conference on June 16, under the chairmanship of Lord Owen and Thorwald Stoltenberg, the Serbian and Croatian Presidents announced an agreement on the establishment of a new Bosnian state, comprising three ethnically-based republics. It was essentially a Serb proposal, produced after consultation with Croat leaders, and viewed by Serbian President Milosevic as a 'really huge advance'.¹⁹² Evidently encouraged by international appeasement of their respective offensives in eastern and central Bosnia, by the impunity which met the Bosnian

¹⁹⁰ *Le Monde*, May 28, 1993, p.3.

¹⁹¹ *Keesing's Record of World Events*, May 1993, p.39470. Other European NATO states, with the exception of France, believed air strikes should also protect civilians trapped in the 'safe areas'.

¹⁹² OWEN, op.cit. p.191.

Serb rejection of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and, not least, by the international retreat signaled in the Joint Action Programme, the Serbian and Croatian presidents, along with Bosnian Serb and Croat leaders, now pressed for a settlement which, if fully implemented, was likely to lead to the eventual dissolution of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the shorter-term, the new proposals involved further large-scale population movements and the creation of three more or less ethnically homogeneous republics, with a considerable reduction in central government powers.¹⁹³ Bosnia's Muslims would be confined mainly to Central Bosnia and the Bihac enclave in the north-west.

The Serb-Croat proposals laid the foundations for the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan (also referred to as the Union of Three Republics),¹⁹⁴ the EU Action Plan and the Contact Group Plan on which the Dayton Peace Agreement was eventually based. According to the map proposed by Serbs and Croats, Serb-claimed territory would be contiguous with Serbia, and Croat-claimed territory with Croatia, while the three territorial blocks proposed for Bosnia's Muslims would be fractionated. Lord Owen saw his role as helping to evolve the new Serb-Croat plan in a way that would make it acceptable to the Bosnian President.¹⁹⁵ 'We would just cajole and pressurize all the parties until we reached the percentage figures that all could agree on'.¹⁹⁶ Since, however, both Serb and Croat leaders were already acquiescent in principle, having produced the plan, it was Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic on whom all the pressure was brought to bear. Izetbegovic considered Owen's role as

¹⁹³ Ibid. p.203.

¹⁹⁴ See map 3, p.351.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p.191.

¹⁹⁶ Owen also admitted, however, that 'we were going to need the United States to pressurize Izetbegovic to accept the map', despite having previously stated that he envisaged the ICFY co-chairs' task as seeing if the map 'could evolve in a way that would make it acceptable to President Izetbegovic'. Ibid. p.191.

a case study in *real-politik*...He began to exert strong and systematic pressure on our government to accept the partition of the country, even the possible partition of Sarajevo, and then opposed the bombing of Serb positions because of their continued aggression, stated that the Serbs owned 65% of the land in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Karadzic's data) and finally tried to break up the existing Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, proposing that instead of the legal Presidency a nine-member coordinating body be formed on the principle of parity, with three members each from the Serb, Croat and Bosniac peoples...In everything he proposed and did this time, Lord Owen had the support of Milosevic and Tudjman.¹⁹⁷

Owen played a vital role in influencing members of the Bosnian Presidency, as it became increasingly divided. Having resurrected the multi-ethnic collective Bosnian Presidency, defunct since the onset of war, Owen met Fikret Abdic in December 1992, and encouraged Abdic to take a more active part in the Presidency.¹⁹⁸ Izetbegovic and his deputy found themselves isolated in their rejection of the new Serb-Croat plan, as Abdic, the sole Muslim representative amongst the remaining seven members, sided with the Serbs and Croats.¹⁹⁹ Owen, now backed by a two-pronged Serb-Croat offensive and a compliant Abdic, exerted pressure on Izetbegovic to participate in the partition talks in Geneva, accusing him of lacking the will 'to make the necessary compromise to save people'.²⁰⁰ In the early part of the war, Croat and Muslim members

¹⁹⁷ IZETBEGOVIC, Alija. *Inescapable Questions*. The Islamic Foundation, 2003, p.255-6. By introducing an equal 3-way split within the Bosnian Presidency, Owen was once again favouring the Croats, who comprised only 17% of the population, at the expense of the Bosniacs.

¹⁹⁸ OWEN, op.cit. p.83. Fikret Abdic had been jailed for financial fraud in 1987, and was currently brokering deals with Karadzic's Serbs. See BURG/SHOUP, op.cit. p.44. Perhaps the most telling example of Abdic's closeness to the Bosnian Serb hierarchy was General Ratko Mladic's comment to refugees after the fall of Srebrenica: 'Why did you follow Alija? You should have followed Fikret Abdic'. Quoted in ROHDE, David. op.cit. p.223.

¹⁹⁹ *Guardian*, June 28, 1993, p.10, & *Sunday Times*, June 27, 1993, p.20. In a joint declaration, Karadzic recognized the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia, which Abdic set up in the Bihac pocket after the Bosnian Assembly rejected an international peace conference to end the war. *Reuters*, October 22, 1993.

²⁰⁰ The UN Commander in Former Yugoslavia, General Jean Cot, asserted that if the Geneva Conference archives had all been preserved (although he believed they had not) they would reveal

of the Presidency had cooperated closely. The Bosnian Prime Minister Mile Akmadzic (a Croat) had made an effort to revive the collective leadership of the Presidency, returning to live in Sarajevo and attempting to reinforce the Muslim-Croat coalition which won the independence referendum in March 1992. With the introduction of the Vance-Owen Plan in January 1993, however, friction arose between the Croat and Muslim members of the Presidency, due to the clear Croat bias of the plan.

Lord Owen was, at the outset, anxious to distance himself from the new Serb-Croat plan, arguing that it was 'agreed by the parties, negotiated... in Geneva'.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, he soon assumed a major role, without the support of the United States, and with little from the EC whom he was allegedly representing, with the exception of Britain and France.²⁰² The EC Foreign Affairs Commissioner insisted that the international community should either defend the Bosnians or acknowledge Bosnia's right to self-defence. The European Parliament (EP) was also highly critical of Owen. Owen dismissed EP debating as 'an unedifying mixture of cant and humbug', however.²⁰³ Even Cyrus Vance implicitly criticized his former ICFY colleague, describing the partition scheme as a 'tragic mistake' which would result in continuing bloodshed, and reward the perpetrators of 'ethnic cleansing'.²⁰⁴ Following threats from Muslim communities outside Bosnia over his perceived pro-Serb policies, Owen

the direct responsibility of Owen and Stoltenberg in the intra-Muslim conflict in Bihac in September 1993, when Fikret Abdic allied with the Bosnian Serb and Croat leaderships. COT, ed. op.cit. p.127

²⁰¹ OWEN, op.cit. pp. 191 & 212.

²⁰² Owen was omitted from briefings by US envoy Reginald Bartholomew and his successor, Charles Redman. OWEN, Ibid. p.207. On August 8, Germany, supported by the Netherlands, went as far as distributing a COREU expressing doubts over the Geneva negotiations. OWEN, p.210. See also OWEN, pp.192, 202 & 208.

²⁰³ OWEN, Ibid. p.198.

²⁰⁴ *Guardian*, July 2, 1993

looked to Britain for security protection.²⁰⁵ Owen's continuing central role in the peace negotiations after the abandonment of the VOPP was due mainly to strong UK support.²⁰⁶

Britain dominated the debate on Bosnia at the EC Summit in Copenhagen on June 22, where splits within the Community became more evident. Germany pressed for the arms embargo to be lifted, backed by several other EC governments. Even President Mitterand appeared to waver.²⁰⁷ The British Prime Minister won over the meeting, however, warning that lifting the embargo would lead to a bloodier war. At his end of summit speech, Major declared that European leaders had not changed policy, and reaffirmed confidence in the peace efforts led by Lord Owen.²⁰⁸ The final communiqué pledged troops and money as an "indispensable contribution" to an overall settlement but made no mention of the arms embargo.

Throughout July, fighting intensified in Bosnia and, on July 17, Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman backtracked on their previous commitment to guarantee the Bosnian government 30% of Bosnian territory.²⁰⁹ Karadzic, meanwhile, was playing for time. In late July, he wrote to Owen with the suggestion of a summit on the Union in mid

²⁰⁵ Owen records that the British government insisted he had a bomb-proof car in Beirut. OWEN, op.cit. p.207.

²⁰⁶ Owen records that his main reason for continuing as EC envoy after the rejection of the VOPP was due to pressure from Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg and Foreign Office official Jeremy Greenstock, who travelled to Geneva at the Foreign Secretary's insistence to persuade Owen to stay. OWEN, Ibid. p.175.

²⁰⁷ *The Times*, June 23, 1993.

²⁰⁸ OWEN, op.cit. p.175 Years later, Douglas Hurd commented that one of John Major's main talents was the management of difficult meetings, citing Bosnia as a particular example. Speech by Douglas Hurd, *The Traverse*, Edinburgh, October 13, 2003.

²⁰⁹ ICFY Memorandum, July 17, 1993. CD93G17.PAR. Owen notes that 'the Co-Chairmen stressed the importance of reaching this figure, and the significance it now had in the eyes of the international community'.

Autumn,²¹⁰ a delay which would have enabled VRS forces to acquire further territory in eastern Bosnia and around the Brcko corridor. Owen warned the Bosnian Serb leader that 'the pressure to use NATO airpower...is growing by the day, and the capability now exists[with] the potential for a far more serious intervention involving the full weight of the United States'. He pressed Karadzic to reach a negotiated settlement on the basis of a map with '26.1% of the total area of Bosnia and Herzegovina being assigned to a predominantly muslim [sic] republic',²¹¹ proposing, however, that that figure be increased to 30%.

The main objections to the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan were set out in a letter from Bosnian President Izetbegovic to the US Ambassador (who that month was also Security Council President) on August 11, referring specifically to a report dated August 6, from Owen and Stoltenberg to the UN Security Council.²¹² The Bosnian President wrote *inter alia* that

The report does not give a true picture of the cause and nature of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina...The complex ethnic structure and the historical background are not the essential causes of the war... the cause of the war is the aggression from the outside... The report does not identify, nor does it raise the issue of the responsibility of those who are violating the Security Council resolutions and the provisions of international war laws and human rights...The proposals as made by the sides are not respectively fairly interpreted. The proposals of the Bosnian delegation, that were submitted also in writing, have not been quoted or attached in the Appendices.²¹³

Izetbegovic's letter also focused on the detail of the proposals at some length. However, at the core of his criticism was the fact that he was

²¹⁰ Letter from ICFY Co-Chairs to Dr Karadzic on negotiations for Union of Three Republics, July 23, 1993. ref. CD93G23.PAR. Karadzic from Belgrade declared 'Why should we negotiate with the Muslims at all? They are militarily defeated...' Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Co-Chairmen's report S/26260, August 6, 1993.

²¹³ Letter to Ms Madeleine Albright, President of the UN Security Council, August 11, 1993, challenging Co-Chairmen's Report S/26260 of August 6, 1993. Ref.CD93H06.PAR.

being required to negotiate and reach agreement on details of the map while the aggression continued. Owen and Stoltenberg argued, however, without offering evidence for their view, that Izetbegovic was now seeking a Muslim republic. Owen stated he had, in principle, no objection to this.²¹⁴ The allegation was not true, however, and had the effect of radicalising the Bosnian government in international eyes at a time when the United States was considering air strikes to prevent the VRS forces from closing off the only route into Sarajevo. On the day the report to the Security Council was published, Owen wrote to Belgian Foreign Minister Willi Claes, advising him that

now is the time for a political strategy in relation to the negotiations, with the military strategy taking second place. I remain very concerned about the pressures still mounting for wide use of air strikes... My instinct is that the United States and the Community could pressurise Izetbegovic to accept the map envisaged by the Serb/Croat proposal in Brcko, Eastern Bosnia, the Bihac pocket, and Central Bosnia. Indeed I think it is absolutely essential that this is agreed if we are to get any rethinking by the Serbs on their approach to Sarajevo...²¹⁵

This approach somewhat conflicted with Owen's earlier assertion that he was merely a mediator between the parties, and had no intention of pressurizing the Bosnian government. Owen also proposed to the EC Presidency that Sarajevo should fall under the auspices of the UN, advising Belgian Foreign Minister Willi Claes to liaise with 'those of our colleagues who are most involved, such as Douglas [Hurd] and Alain [Juppe]'.²¹⁶ Once again, Owen was using his influence in persuading successive EC Presidencies of the rectitude of policies mostly originating in London. Acknowledging that the Serbs were unlikely to give up any

²¹⁴ The concept of a purely Muslim state was strongly opposed by the Bosnian (Muslim) Prime Minister, however. OWEN, op.cit. p.216.

²¹⁵ Letter from Lord Owen to Foreign Minister Claes, August 6, 1993. Ref. CD93H06A.PAR. Belgium held the EC Presidency from July 1, 1993.

²¹⁶ Letter from Lord Owen to Willi Claes, August 6, 1993, op.cit.

areas they currently occupied, Owen, in proposing a UN takeover of the capital, clearly had in mind the Croatian Krajina situation where the UN presence merely froze Serb territorial gains.²¹⁷

Under the Owen-Stoltenberg plan, the territory proposed to be allocated to the Bosnian government would be virtually landlocked. There was no guarantee that the Serbs would lift siege of Sarajevo or withdraw from occupied territory since, as before, enforcement provisions were omitted. The currency issue was also crucial. The Owen-Stoltenberg Plan did not refer to a central bank, which would imply a single currency, the Bosnian government preference. Owen, however, endorsed the Serb/Croat proposal for the Serbian *dinar* and Croatian *kuna*, respectively. In a letter to EC foreign ministers, Owen explained that 'because the economies of the three republics were likely to be very different, the best solution seemed three currencies'.²¹⁸ This option presaged full-scale partition, and facilitated eventual secession. By late August, even Owen admitted that 'EC unity was fraying at the edges',²¹⁹ attributing the reluctance of Germany and the Netherlands to accept the plan as due to hostile public opinion in those countries. EC Commissioner Van den Broek went further, accusing the co-chairs publicly of a strategy of capitulation' before the Serbs and 'legitimized aggression'.²²⁰

A deadline for signature of the Owen/Stoltenberg Plan was set for August 30 in Geneva, with no evidence of international readiness to supply the thousands of extra troops needed to secure the three-way

²¹⁷ "The advantage is that the Serbs, after their experience in the UNPAs, will realise they can control their own areas." Lord Owen, *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ COREU from Lord Owen Personal for Foreign Ministers. Geneva Plenary Talks on Union of Three Republics, 29 July, 8. Ref. CO93G30.PAR, and OWEN, *op.cit.* p.203. On the banking system, Owen consulted with representatives of the Bank of England. Ref.CD93G20.PAR.

²¹⁹ OWEN, *Ibid.* p.213.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

ethnic division. The Bosnian Croat leadership accepted partition, but the Croat communities outside the proposed new Croat statelet opposed it,²²¹ as did most Bosniacs. As the Geneva talks again stalled, Owen suggested to the EC foreign ministers a timetable for lifting sanctions on Serbia, in order to encourage Milosevic's cooperation.²²²

On September 8, at a UN Security Council meeting, President Izetbegovic appealed to Representatives to 'defend us, or let us defend ourselves'. The Council reportedly responded with 'a rare, heavy silence'... leaving the US Ambassador 'visibly shaken'.²²³ The Ambassador then responded herself, stating the US view that the arms embargo should be lifted.²²⁴ Following the closed Council meeting, British and US officials clashed publicly.²²⁵ The British view was that no diplomatic niceties were required because Izetbegovic had been emotional rather than specific about his requirements.²²⁶

According to a leaked internal UNHCR report, while peace talks carried on through September, the systematic persecution of Bosniacs in Banja Luka and elsewhere in Northern Bosnia continued unabated,²²⁷ On September 20, the Royal Navy hosted the three parties, including the Serbian, Croatian and Montenegrin Presidents, on HMS *Invincible* in the Adriatic, where the map and other details of the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan

²²¹ *Sunday Times*, August, 29, 1993, p.14.

²²² COREU 93111.PAR, September 11, 1993, Background Note from Lord Owen for EC Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

²²³ *Washington Post*, September 8, 1993, p.A23.

²²⁴ *Independent*, September 9, 1993.

²²⁵ The US Ambassador reportedly approached British Ambassador David Hannay saying 'I'm stunned, stunned. Why didn't you say anything? ... (Izetbegovic) spoke eloquently that the international community had let him down...nobody spoke'. Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid. The Bosnian President's requirements had, however, been explicit. He had come to request the reversal of ethnic cleansing and an end to the siege of Sarajevo.

²²⁷ *Independent*, September 9, 1993.

were finalised in an 8-hour session, for presentation to the Bosnian Assembly the following week. Despite Owen's indication after the *Invincible* meeting that all three parties were likely to accept, the Bosnian government rejected the Owen/Stoltenberg Plan and it foundered, like its predecessors, as did the so-called EC Action Plan later that year which allocated slightly more territory to the Bosnian government, but proposed little else new and, like the earlier plans, contained no enforcement provisions.

The Mt Igman Crisis

Parellel with the promotion of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan, a new crisis arose within Bosnia as, on July 17, VRS forces launched a major offensive in the region of the Igman mountains overlooking Sarajevo airport.

This section examines divergences between British and US policy in addressing the Mt. Igman crisis, and the establishment of the 'dual key' arrangement between NATO and the UN which was to provoke clashes between those two institutions and amongst major world powers over the following two years.

Mt. Igman controlled the government's only supply route into the capital as, reportedly, more than 2,000 shells were fired on Bosnian positions in the fiercest onslaught on Sarajevo since its declaration as a UN 'safe area'.²²⁸ This, together with the mortaring of Sarajevo residents in a water queue by Serb artillery the previous week, and with only minimal supplies of water, gas, electricity and food reaching Sarajevo's citizens,²²⁹ moved Bosnian President Izetbegovic to withdraw from the

²²⁸ *Agence France Presse*, July 17, 1993, quoted in *IHRLI Sarajevo Source File*, July 1993.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* July 16, 1993.

Geneva talks, pending the withdrawal of the VRS forces from Igman.²³⁰ Clinton had already attributed the failure of the peace negotiations to European opposition to his proposal to lift the UN arms embargo against the Bosnian government²³¹ and, as VRS forces attacked the French UNPROFOR base in Sarajevo within hours of a UN-brokered ceasefire, Clinton again examined the various options on breaking the Sarajevo siege, not excluding unilateral military action.²³² It was decided first, however, to seek allied endorsement for the threat of air strikes, firstly to force the Serbs back from around Sarajevo and, secondly, to promote an agreement, while being prepared to act unilaterally.²³³ On July 24, Lake and Bartholomew, the Administration's Bosnia envoy, left for Europe, meeting first with the British in London who were reported as positive,²³⁴ and then with the French. On the basis of these meetings, Clinton decided there was enough consensus to take the matter to a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on August 2. Accordingly, Administration officials announced that air action was imminent.²³⁵ NATO members agreed that immediate preparations for stronger measures in Bosnia would be made if the strangulation of Sarajevo and other safe areas continued.²³⁶ As a condition for their agreement, however, Britain and France insisted that NATO commanders secure UN agreement before acting.

²³⁰ Reuters, July 18, 1993, Ibid.

²³¹ "Larry King Live" CNN, July 20, 1993, quoted in *Chicago Tribune*, July 22, 1993.

²³² Warren Christopher, since his abortive European tour in May, was, however, less enthusiastic about further initiatives which clashed with the British and French position. According to one senior US official, 'After his European trip, Christopher put Bosnia in the 'too hard' box, and it stayed there for a long time'. DREW, op.cit. p.274.

²³³ Ibid. p.275.

²³⁴ John Major in his memoirs quoted one US delegate as saying 'it is the only chance to make lemonade out of lemons'. MAJOR, op.cit. pp.542-3.

²³⁵ Differences within the Clinton Administration remained, however. While Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill McPeak was optimistic about air action, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, argued that Serb artillery could easily be moved out of sight.

²³⁶ DREW, op.cit. p.278.

The decision to present the plan to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) was made at a meeting on July 31, attended by President Clinton, Secretary of State Christopher, Defense Secretary Aspin, National Security Advisor Lake and General Powell, the armed forces Chief of General Staff.²³⁷ On the eve of the NATO ambassadors' meeting, the White House announced that air strikes "could begin within the next few days" to end the siege of Sarajevo.²³⁸ Support for selective air strikes was also forthcoming from Spain, which had a substantial UN force on the ground.²³⁹ Also, French Defence Minister Francois Leotard, after an hour-long meeting with US Defence Secretary Les Aspin told reporters at the Pentagon that the western allies would not tolerate further attacks on UN troops in Bosnia, and were prepared to launch air strikes if they continued.²⁴⁰

Before the scheduled NAC meeting, Owen wrote to Douglas Hurd:

We are grateful for the calming influence that you are trying to exert but the fact is that Washington seems intent on continuing down this path, and very quickly. The UN is coming under fierce pressure from the highest quarters to give a *carte blanche* for widespread use of air strikes. So far this is being resisted by Stoltenberg and the UN Secretary General, and I believe we have bought time for a day or so... We have asked Briquemont to submit a report on the situation which will be drafted by Brigadier Hayes.²⁴¹ We expect this will paint a fairly positive picture, and we believe it should be presented in Washington... I believe that all available channels should be used to persuade the Americans that air strikes at this stage can only be damaging. I have

²³⁷ *Agence France Presse*, August 1, 1993, quoted in *IHRLI, Sarajevo Source File*, August 1993.

²³⁸ *New York Times*, August 2, 1993, p.A14.

²³⁹ In an interview with the state news agency Efe, Spanish Defence Minister Julian Garcia Vargas commented: «the international community has acted so far with caution and what is now needed is firm action». *Reuters*, August 1, 1993, quoted in *IHRLI*, op.cit.

²⁴⁰ *Reuters*, July 29, 1993, quoted in *IHRLI*, op.cit.

²⁴¹ Brigadier Vere Hayes was the British Chief of Staff of UN forces in Bosnia. Former Adviser to the US Ambassador to the UN James Rubin recalled that Vere Hayes was 'clearly offering the 'all sides are guilty' thesis...in the 'you Americans are naïve and we know better' mode'. Quoted in *SIMMS*, op.cit. p.196.

spoken to Churkin...and asked him to get Kozyrev to contact Christopher and tell him that in the light of the considerable progress that has been made it would be wrong to go ahead with the air strike policy. My French Deputy, Ambassador Masset, has passed a similar message to Juppe...

The French want to keep [the NAC meeting on 2 August] very low key, with no dramatic announcements. I would far prefer no NAC meeting because I do not believe it will be played low key by the US...²⁴²

Owen also wrote to the NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wornier, requesting that ICFY deputy Jean-Pierre Masset brief the NAC before the US presented their own case; he also cabled EC Foreign Ministers advising them that "talk of wide use of air strikes at the present juncture were unhelpful", and that emphasis should be laid on NATO's role in implementing a peace settlement on the basis of three republics.²⁴³ The fact that the Bosnian side had withdrawn from the talks at this point appeared irrelevant. Owen had also briefed Ottawa closely on ICFY views, attributing this to the active role Canada assumed at the NAC meeting in forestalling immediate NATO action.²⁴⁴ Instead, NATO planners were instructed to draw up operational options in preparation for a final decision the following week. The NATO communiqué, issued after a 12-hour debate on August 2 in Brussels, read:

The Alliance has now decided to make immediate preparations for undertaking, in the event that the strangulation of Sarajevo and other areas continues...stronger measures including air strikes against those responsible. Bosnian Serbs and others, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁴⁵

Several high-ranking members of the mainly European UN force stationed in Sarajevo also voiced opposition,²⁴⁶ in particular UN Chief of

²⁴² 'Air Strikes letter to Hurd', July 31, 1993. CD93G31.PAR.

²⁴³ OWEN, op.cit. p.205.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p.206.

²⁴⁵ *Keesing's Record of World Events*, August 1993, p.39603.

²⁴⁶ *UPI*, August 2, 1993, quoted in *IHRLI*, op.cit.

Staff Brigadier General Hayes. Hayes informed reporters that the Bosnian army bore the main blame for blocking relief supplies to Sarajevo, and that the current Serb assault on Mt. Igman was strangling only the Bosnian military supply line into Sarajevo.²⁴⁷ The following week, Hayes declared that 'there is no humanitarian siege of Sarajevo'. UNPROFOR spokesperson Barry Frewer added that the Bosnian Serb army was 'in a tactically advantageous position around the city . I don't want to portray it as a siege . . . I see it as an encirclement'.²⁴⁸ The following day at the UN Security Council, US Ambassador Albright, with support from other Security Council members, publicly criticised comments made by Brigadier Hayes. According to Albright, the UN Secretary-General accepted the complaint that the two UN peace-keeping officers had made inappropriate remarks. Reportedly, the Bosnian government declared Frewer *persona non grata* in Sarajevo and called for his removal. No action was taken by UNPROFOR, however.²⁴⁹

As the pressure for air strikes mounted, Douglas Hurd rang Lord Owen, allegedly concerned that the Conference might adjourn.²⁵⁰ Also at this time, Shadow Defence Secretary David Clark and senior Labour MP John Reid travelled to Geneva at the Serbs' expense to meet Karadzic.²⁵¹ According to Clark, the visit helped persuade Karadzic to move his troops from Igman, thus saving many thousands of lives.²⁵² In the same week, the *Sunday Times* carried an article by Jonathan Eyal, Director of the Royal United Services Institute in London, arguing against the use of

²⁴⁷ *Reuters*, August 5, 1993, quoted in *IHRLI*, Ibid. See also OWEN, op.cit. p.208.

²⁴⁸ *UPI*, 16 August 1993, Ibid.

²⁴⁹ *UPI*, August 18, 1993, Ibid. and OWEN, op.cit. p.211. According to Owen, the brigadier's comment was 'What does Clinton think he is doing?'

²⁵⁰ OWEN, op.cit. p.209. Adjournment of the Geneva Conference would, of course, have made air strikes more probable.

²⁵¹ The visit later aroused media interest when it was discovered that it had not been recorded in the MPs Record of Interests. *Sunday Times*, June 29, 1997. See also HODGE, *The Serb Lobby*, op.cit. p.14, for details of that visit.

air strikes as 'wrong at every level', and concluding that the Serbs had won the war.²⁵³ Meanwhile, on August 9, in a government PR exercise organised by the Foreign Office, five-year-old Irma Hadzimuratovic, wounded in a Serb mortar attack on July 30, was air-lifted out of Sarajevo by an RAF Hercules to Britain for treatment.²⁵⁴ The Irma story, commanding British press headlines for several days, proved a distraction from the events on the ground, as well as from European attempts to dilute the US threat.²⁵⁵

The pressure for air strikes abated following a meeting between UN commanders and General Mladic at the Bosnian Serb headquarters in Pale. Afterwards, it was announced by the ICFY co-chairs that the Serbs would cede Mt. Igman to UN troops.²⁵⁶ According to anonymous UN sources, the Serbs, in deliberating on whether to withdraw from the mountains around Sarajevo, had closely followed the negotiations between the US and its NATO allies on terms concerning air strikes.²⁵⁷ As a protracted Serb withdrawal from Igman commenced,²⁵⁸ General

²⁵³ *Sunday Times*, August 8, 1993.

²⁵⁴ On July 16, UNHCR Commissioner Sadako Ogata had appealed to 43 governments, including Britain, for help in removing specific victims from Sarajevo, without receiving a single response. *Scotland on Sunday*, August 15, 1993, p.8.

²⁵⁵ Patrick Peillod, the French head of the UN medical evacuation committee, criticised Britain for its 'supermarket attitude', turning the evacuation issue into a PR exercise, and treating Bosnian children 'like animals in a zoo'. *Agence France Presse*, 15 August 1993, quoted from *IHRLI*, op.cit. An open letter from Dr. Faruk Kulenovic, head of Kosevo hospital's plastic surgery department, published August 16, stated "It would be much better if you sent the tools to do our jobs properly than for you to make a big show of a few token evacuations, chief of surgery at Kosevo hospital, said, 'the West is making self-promotion out of this. But it's too little and too late to clear their consciences'. *UPI*, August 15, 1993, Ibid.

²⁵⁶ *Agence France Press*, August 5, 1993, Ibid. Owen records that it was Milosevic who had advised that the meeting should take place at Pale. OWEN, op.cit. p.207-8.

²⁵⁷ *New York Times*, August 11, 1993.

²⁵⁸ *UPI*, August 7, 1993, quoted from *IHRLI*, Ibid. Days later, despite the reported consolidation of the Serbian strongholds, including columns of self-propelled field guns and military trucks moving along the main access routes to the mountains, backed up by at least 600 newly arrived soldiers, Bosnian Serb spokesman Jovan Zametica told reporters in Geneva that Serb troops on Mount Igman had withdrawn to the lines of July 30. *Reuters*, August 12, 1993, quoted from *IHRLI*, op.cit.

Mladic announced that the Serbs would surrender positions one by one, contingent on their replacement by UN forces. This would tie up UN troops, of course, without actually lifting the siege. There was also speculation that the demand on UN resources to oversee the ceded territory could cause delays in the pullback, since the 9,000-strong UN overall force allowed for little more than monitoring of the areas the Serb forces had vacated.²⁵⁹

Meanwhile, a device which became known as the 'dual key' arrangement was established, whereby any military action would be determined jointly by NATO and the UN.²⁶⁰ When NATO met on August 9, its original declaration was toned down in the tacit acknowledgement that the political will for air strikes did not exist.²⁶¹ On August 13, the US Secretary of State conceded publicly that the Clinton Administration would be satisfied with a partial Serb withdrawal from Mts. Bjelasnica and Igman.²⁶² UN Commander General Briquemont, meanwhile, confirmed that the Serbs still threatened the city with their firepower.²⁶³ David Owen had used the pretext of the peace negotiations to persuade EC foreign ministers to oppose the US air strike initiative, and the North Atlantic Council to defer its decision. In this, he was supported by the British government, British Chief of Staff Brigadier Vere Hayes, senior Labour MPs and other prominent British personalities.

The peace talks collapsed the following month, and Sarajevo remained under siege, but the threat of air strikes had again been averted, and the

²⁵⁹ *New York Times*, August 9, 1993.

²⁶⁰ *UPI*, August 9, 1993, quoted from *IHRLI*, op.cit.

²⁶¹ *Guardian*, August 10, 1993.

²⁶² Yet, according to Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic, the Serb troops had tightened their strategic noose around Sarajevo by deploying 2,000 fresh troops in less visible lowlands closer to front lines after pulling them off Mounts Igman and Bjelasnica, rendering the siege even stronger than previously. *UPI & Agence France Presse*, August 13, 1993, quoted from *IHRLI*, op.cit.

²⁶³ *Reuters*, 16 August 1993, quoted from *IHRLI*, Ibid.

VRS shelling of Sarajevo subsided temporarily.²⁶⁴ The 'dual key' arrangement was controversial from the outset, and later caused a fundamental rift to develop between Europe and the US over the command of air operations in Bosnia, most crucially in Gorazde and Bihac in April and October 1994, and Srebrenica in July 1995.

House of Commons. July 1993

As the Igman crisis was developing, a significant parliamentary debate on Bosnia took place in the House of Commons, challenging many of the precepts on which the British government's Bosnia policy had been built. The debate opened at 9.30 p.m. on July 26 and included contributions by MPs from across the political spectrum. Labour MP Calum Macdonald, who had called the debate, set the terms of reference, alleging that the government had misled parliament on advice from military heads and aid workers, and that it had misjudged the national political will; he challenged the government's performance at UN Security Council level, accusing the government of playing for time, and called into question the 'civil war' argument.

The Minister often claims that there is no political or domestic will in the House or the country. I genuinely think he is utterly wrong to make that claim. I think there is a huge groundswell of opinion among ordinary people in the country that the United Kingdom should be doing much more than it has over the past two years.²⁶⁵

41 [UN Security Council] resolutions...have been passed during the past 23 months...but never fully implemented and, in essence, have changed nothing in former Yugoslavia...The Government...have put their signatures to all the resolutions. They have helped to draft all the resolutions, including the resolution on safe areas.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Sarajevo's Kosevo hospital reported the lowest toll in war wounds for months on the day after the NATO summit. *New York Times*, August 4, 1993.

²⁶⁵ Calum Macdonald, *Yugoslavia*, July 26, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.229, c.838.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* c.839.

The Government often give the impression that they are playing for time...that, if they can stretch out the endless series of resolutions and play out the endless sequence of conferences and negotiations for long enough, the public will eventually become disinterested.²⁶⁷

When Ministers search for an excuse for non-intervention, they often say that there is a civil war in former Yugoslavia and Bosnia and that we cannot become involved in a civil war. Of course, communities and civilians are caught up in the war. In that sense, it is civil... However, it is not a civil war in the sense that its primary source and inspiration is internal and domestic - absolutely not.²⁶⁸

the Government's claims that all the expert advice from humanitarian workers, the military and the diplomatic corps is against intervention are being shown to be grossly and gravely misleading. A group of us visited the NATO headquarters recently. We left there with the clear impression that most senior officials in NATO were satisfied that intervention was not only feasible and advisable but urgently required. We received a clear impression that there was intense frustration at the failure at the political level to take the steps necessary to resolve the crisis.²⁶⁹

Macdonald reiterated his allegation on two occasions later that year in the House of Commons:

I have it on reliable authority that two successive chairmen of the military committee of NATO have recommended and urged a military intervention by NATO in Bosnia. General Eyde [sic], who was chairman of NATO's military committee, before the present incumbent, General Vincent, recommended early last year that 40,000 troops be put into Bosnia to prevent the situation from exploding.²⁷⁰

I do not believe that it has been the failure to impose military will that has held western Governments back from intervening in the Balkans on a grand scale. My conversations with General Vincent and his

²⁶⁷ Ibid.c.839.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 839-840. Macdonald pointed out that at the European Council Summit in Edinburgh in December 1992, it was plainly stated in a communiqué by the Heads of State that although there were civil aspects to what was happening in former Yugoslavia, the primary responsibility lay with the Serbian Government in Belgrade. Ibid. c.840.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. c.839.

²⁷⁰ Calum Macdonald, Statement of the Defence Estimates, October 18, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.264, c.86.

predecessor General Eide, have convinced me that a lack of political will has been the key to the failure of the West to intervene more aggressively in the Balkans.²⁷¹

Macdonald's allegations were supported by other MPs. Labour MP Clare Short confirmed that

when we visited NATO we were told that all it took to enforce the safe areas strategy was the commitment of 8,000 troops and a change in the rules of engagement...NATO...felt that this was a European responsibility and that European troops, at that very small level, should be committed.²⁷²

Patrick Cormack, the only Conservative MP consistently to challenge government policy on former Yugoslavia, added:

I have talked to soldiers, diplomats and journalists. I do not want to break confidences or embarrass people, but suffice it to say that I am not persuaded - how shall I word this carefully - that what has been said in the House entirely reflects the advice that I am told has been given at a lower level. Perhaps that advice has not permeated to the top and, if that is the case, there is something wrong with the system. There is an appreciation among diplomats and those responsible in NATO and elsewhere that there is something that should and could be done.²⁷³

Cormack also quoted BBC journalist Martin Bell as saying at a meeting in the House two weeks previously 'that he was convinced that the Serb gun positions could easily have been taken out. They were not as mobile as some would have had us believe'.²⁷⁴ The mobility of the Serb gun positions around Sarajevo was one of the main reasons proffered in arguing against the viability of air strikes to lift the siege.

Labour backbencher Chris Mullin was more explicit:

²⁷¹ Calum Macdonald, Peacekeeping Operations, December 13, 1993, *Hansard*. Vol.234, c.717.

²⁷² *Ibid.* c.841.

²⁷³ *Ibid.* c.845.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The House and the country have been badly misled. From the outset, we have been told that nothing can be done about anything in Bosnia. We have been told that the terrain is impossible, that the people are impossible and that the experts are against doing anything. No doubt those same arguments were rehearsed in the 1930s. However, I think that we have been misled and that the experts, of all persuasions, have been saying something different.²⁷⁵

Liberal Democrat Sir Russell Johnston referred to a briefing from the *Action Rapide* headquarters in Paris the previous year:

During the briefing, the general was asked specifically what he thought about the military implications of lifting the siege of Sarajevo and he more or less said, 'if you give me proper notice and 36 hours, I will do it.'²⁷⁶

The Foreign Minister in his response ignored many of the most provocative points raised, including the allegation that the government had misled the House,²⁷⁷ merely reiterating that he did not believe the national will existed for military intervention.

When people talk about public support for military intervention, I believe that they are wrong...I have made it my business to try to determine where political views lie and I do not believe that they lie in deepening military engagement.²⁷⁸

The House of Commons adjourned for the Summer recess shortly thereafter. During an official visit to Malaysia that Summer, John Major was forced to depart from his prepared text as the Malaysian Prime

²⁷⁵ Ibid. c.861.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. c.848.

²⁷⁷ SNP leader Alex Salmond's intervention was pertinent: 'I have noted the almost studied indifference of Ministers. Would it hurt Ministers to listen to the speeches on this important subject?' Ibid. c.865.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. c.873.

Minister Mahatir delivered an open direct attack on British policy towards Bosnia.²⁷⁹

In the first week of August, Channel 4 presented *Bloody Bosnia Week*, covering various aspects of the Bosnian war, while *The Independent* launched a public campaign to lift the siege of Sarajevo. In early September, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd delivered a speech at the Travellers' Club, decrying media intervention and what he called 'the something-must-be-done brigade'. In the following months, reporting of the Bosnia war moved to the inside pages of the British broadsheet press.²⁸⁰ Equally, there was little further debate on the Bosnian war that year in the House of Commons.²⁸¹ Secret talks initiated by the ICFY in Norway in late October also collapsed. By the Autumn, NATO military staffs had completed a detailed plan to deploy a 50,000 strong peacekeeping force in Bosnia. Their defence ministers, meeting in mid-October, however, had to concede that there was no political will to act.²⁸² On the other hand, the Foreign Secretary led the House of Commons to believe that progress on the peace front was being achieved. 'There is now revived discussion - I cannot say conclusions - of a sort that there has not been for some time'.²⁸³ This served the purpose of biding time,²⁸⁴ and helped to deflect questioning from MPs critical of British policy. It was not until the massacre of 68 civilians at the

²⁷⁹ Mirza Hajric, *Oslobodjenje*, October 1-8, 1993.

²⁸⁰ As the Commons Deputy Speaker commented: there has been a tendency for media attention [on Bosnia] to drop away, in that rather sad way that we see when somehow it becomes yesterday's news. Michael Marshall (Deputy Speaker), *Peacekeeping Operations*, December 13, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.234, c.711.

²⁸¹ In the Debate on the Address, Former Yugoslavia was relegated to fourth place after Cyprus. Debate on the Address: *Foreign Affairs and Defence*, November 19, 1993, *Hansard*, Vol.233, c.118.

²⁸² *Guardian*, October 18, 1993.

²⁸³ *Ibid.* c.515.

²⁸⁴ See *Yugoslavia*, July 26, 1993, *op.cit.* c.839.

Markale market place in Sarajevo in February 1994 that world leaders were forced once again to focus their efforts on ending the siege.

Conclusion

International attempts to end the war in Bosnia in 1993 were dominated by a series of abortive peace plans, in which former British foreign secretary Lord Owen assumed a leading role. Owen adopted a strategy through the Vance-Owen Peace Plan which accepted the principle of territorial and political division on primarily ethnic grounds, while using terminology which indicated eschewal of the heterogeneity still prevailing in much of Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly some major towns. The Geneva Conference, which emerged from the London Conference the previous summer, accepted in principle the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina which underpinned the Vance-Owen plan. Yet, in practice, the VOPP enshrined the principles of ethnic partition in Bosnia-Herzegovina, introduced through the Cutileiro Plan in 1992, and vindicated the 'percentages' approach which depended on agreement being reached between aggressor and victim on the territorial carve-up of the Bosnian state.

Like the Cutileiro Plan, the VOPP was based on the ethnic division of an intrinsically ethnically-mixed state, awarding 43% of Bosnian territory to the Serbs who had constituted under 33% of the population prior to the war, and 27% to the Croats who formed 17% of the pre-war population, allotting Bosniacs approximately 30% of fragmented, indefensible land, mainly in central Bosnia. Lord Owen justified this anomaly through an argument which had originated in Pale, namely, that the Serbs, traditionally more rurally based, had previously occupied 60% of the land. In this, he was supported by Members of Parliament who had visited the region on Serb-financed trips organised by Serb lobbyists in London. The argument was a spurious one, not least due to the ethnic

diversity which had characterised Bosnia prior to the war, but also because, under the Tito administration, land had been 'socially', rather than individually, owned.

The Bosnian Serb leadership nonetheless rejected the VOPP against the advice of Milosevic, in the expectation that more territory could be gained, and therefore extra leverage in peace negotiations, by maintaining the offensive. This tactic did in fact work since, just weeks later, Owen endorsed a Serb-Croat initiative which effectively split Bosnia-Herzegovina between the two groups, with an option to secede, leaving Bosniacs (and other Bosnian government supporters) with non-contiguous indefensible territory. The Contact Group Plan the following year offered a larger percentage of Bosnian territory to the Serbs along with their own republic, within a weak, decentralised Bosnian state, thereby fulfilling most of the short-term war objectives of the Bosnian Serb leadership.

Although not the sole source of unrest in Central Bosnia, the Vance-Owen Peace Plan gave Bosnian Croats the incentive and encouragement to fight for Croat-allocated territory in traditionally Muslim areas. The conflict between the Bosnian Army and HVO forces erupted at a time when world attention was focused on Srebrenica, and the US was preparing to endorse a policy which included lifting the arms embargo from the Bosnian government, while conducting strategic air strikes on Serb positions. British UNPROFOR failed to prevent a massacre just two miles from its base in Vitez, an area till then enjoying relative peace, and did not act sufficiently swiftly or effectively to forestall, or lessen, the retaliation which, within days, led to hostilities throughout the Lasva Valley. Neither did senior British army officers act on information of large-scale atrocities provided by British troops under their command who had made several patrols of Ahmici on the day of the massacre, or

provide a consistent account of BritBat activities that day in evidence at the UN International Tribunal at the Hague. After the discovery of the massacre, widescale publicity ensured an equivalence of guilt between Croats and Serbs, overshadowing the Serb onslaught on Srebrenica. It also assisted the proponents of the 'civil war' theory which was thereafter used in defence of the Joint Action Programme, essentially a policy of appeasement, of which Britain was a co-sponsor. In short, the new outbreak of hostilities in Central Bosnia facilitated the international retreat from military action against the Serb forces.

The validity of the UNPROFOR mission to escort humanitarian aid was also in question. According to British officers and others, it was no longer possible to implement the aid programme effectively in most of Central Bosnia, due to the obstruction of supply routes by Croat forces. Indeed, throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, in areas where aid was most needed there were, according to UNHCR records, increasingly few deliveries, despite the UNPROFOR presence. To ensure delivery to the eastern enclaves and other remote areas, a large percentage of the aid was surrendered to forces at the road blocks, leading many, including a former British minister, to observe that UNPROFOR was effectively prolonging the war. This practice also resulted in the army controlling most of the supply routes, namely the VRS, obtaining most of the UN aid. The 'escorted aid' mission was a British initiative, however, and Britain, a leading troop contributor, had considerable influence in the regulations governing aid distribution.

The Vance-Owen Plan provided a temporary hiatus for EC leaders, papering over some of the divisions within the European Community with regard to its Bosnia policy. It failed primarily due to rejection by the Bosnian Serb Assembly, but was anyway unworkable since it lacked the enforcement measures required for implementation, with the result that its success rested on the 'goodwill' of Serb leaders to withdraw from 27%

of territory held. Both Milosevic and Bosnian Serb leaders knew this would not be insisted on, hence their acquiescence in the Plan.

British government ministers had emphasized frequently that combat forces would on no account be used to implement the VOPP. Lord Owen, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind and others blamed the United States for the VOPP failure, as well as for inconsistency in their Bosnia policy, and reluctance to offer ground troops. It is true that the VOPP was never fully endorsed by the UN Security Council, due to lack of support from the United States, the main US objections being that it was unfeasible and unenforceable, as well as appeasing ethnic cleansing. America was unwilling to get bogged down in a potential ground war, both for historical reasons (Vietnam) and because there was no clear implementation strategy. The appearance of inconsistency in US policy, however, arose mainly from the discrepancy between its preferred 'lift-and-strike' policy and the necessary accommodation of British and French concerns regarding danger to their troops. This led to a series of policy initiatives on the part of the US, followed by retreat, as America's major NATO allies, and Britain in particular, opposed any policy involving war with the Serbs.

Yet the US threat of force at various junctures was clearly instrumental in Serb compliance, although often temporary, to international demands. Radovan Karadzic's signature to the VOPP in Athens in early May and the VRS withdrawal from Mt Igman in August were two instances that year which illustrated the potential merit of a coherent and resolute (albeit not united) response to the Serb onslaught. Accommodating Serb and Croat territorial aspirations, on the contrary, particularly in the Joint Action Programme, emboldened both parties to press for the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During extensive negotiations, ICFY Co-chair David Owen moved from ostensible sympathy for the 'Muslim' position to a hard-line stance which required placing substantial pressure on the Bosnian President to accept an

emasculated 'Muslim' state, while presenting this, despite evidence to the contrary, as the desired outcome of Bosnian Muslim leaders.

Lord Owen's activities, in fact, extended well beyond his official role in the peace negotiations. As well as nurturing nationalist forces on the Croat side, and Fikret Abdic, a corrupt businessman of Muslim ethnic origin who colluded with Serb forces in the Bosnian and Croatian Krajinas against the Bosnian government, Owen promoted Serbian President Milosevic before the EC as an essential player in any peace agreement. In late August 1993, when the Owen-Stoltenberg plan seemed doomed to the same fate as the VOPP, this time due to Bosnian government rejection, Owen proposed lifting sanctions from Serbia. The EC envoy's strategy, ignoring and even alienating multi-ethnic forces, encouraged leaders in Pale, Belgrade and Zagreb in pursuing racist objectives, which contributed to radicalising Muslim elements in the Bosnian government.

The Joint Action Programme, which extended the 'safe areas' concept on paper, while not guaranteeing their security, was portrayed by Owen as a US initiative. The Srebrenica Report records, however, that, while Britain, and to a lesser extent France, fully supported the JAP, the British ambassador argued strenuously to limit the number of UN troops considered necessary to implement it. The Report also revealed that United States was a reluctant co-signatory, regarding the JAP as no more than a temporary, stop-gap measure, intended to reaffirm a united international front. Russia, in fact, was the instigator of the JAP, the first major Russian contribution to the international policy in the Balkans since the war began, an initiative applauded in the Russian press as a major diplomatic victory.

In order to preempt US military intervention, British government ministers used a number of ploys, including (to the US) the claim that British public and parliamentary opinion was against the military

option. So far as the public was concerned, national opinion polls had indicated the contrary and, in the House of Commons, no vote took place, and there was only infrequent debating on Bosnia, insufficient to assess fully Members' positions although, in the one extensive debate held, the vast majority of speakers were critical of government policy on Bosnia. Conversely, in justifying government policy in the House of Commons and through the media, ministers defended their rejection of military intervention by citing expert military opinion, and positions held by other major world powers. However, as noted by several MPs, the expert opinion was somewhat at odds with that alleged by ministers. The Srebrenica Report also revealed that the United States, with some other Security Council members, including the Non-Aligned Caucus, opposed the British position.

During the Igman crisis, British military and diplomatic officials were active in seeking to allay NATO action. This succeeded, with the assistance of Canada, in eroding NATO's resolve, as demonstrated in the diluted communiqué issued after the NAC meeting, causing an impasse which, in turn, led to the 'dual key' arrangement, effectively blocking NATO from other than token air strikes throughout the rest of the war. The British Chief of Staff in Sarajevo also acted to undermine the US position through public statements, as did the visit of two Labour MPs who travelled to Geneva as guests of Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, while later concealing the trip from the Register of Members' Interests. The unrecorded trip at such a sensitive juncture could have been misinterpreted as indicating official Labour Party support for the Serbs, in contrast with most opposition parties in other major western states.

While promoting peace plans which were essentially unviable, and which served to block other potentially more effective initiatives, Britain argued strenuously in support of maintaining the blanket arms embargo, thereby reaffirming the imbalance of weaponry. While other EC states in varying degrees also broadly supported both the peace process and the

arms embargo, Britain often led the consensus, and was alone in consistently opposing military intervention, and strenuously arguing for the minimal peacekeeping option in Bosnia, policies which, separately and collectively, helped to prolong the war and further consolidate Serb territorial gains in Bosnia-Herzegovina. By the end of 1993, there was an almost total fragmentation of institutional decision-making and action in relation to peace and security which, in turn, affected relations between the United Nations and NATO, and challenged the role of NATO in the new post-Cold War order.

CHAPTER 4

1994. 'SAFE AREAS' : THE ROLE OF MICHAEL ROSE

Introduction

In 1994, the flaws inherent in the UN 'safe areas' policy incorporated in UN Security Council resolution 836 in June 1993 became increasingly exposed, UNPROFOR being neither sufficiently equipped nor mandated to implement the resolution.¹ The friction between NATO and the United Nations resulting from divergent approaches to resolving the crisis was, in great part, a reflection of the conflicting Bosnian policies of the United States on the one hand, and major European powers, on the other.

This chapter analyses some of the implications of the 'safe areas' policy through the international response to its violation by Serb forces in three areas: Sarajevo, Gorazde and Bihac. It also discusses the Contact Group plan which, to some extent, was a by-product of the Gorazde crisis, and formed the basis for the eventual peace settlement at Dayton the following year. The role of General Sir Michael Rose, the British UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina from January 1994, and Lord Owen, Co-Chair of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), are examined, as well as British ministerial statements. Close reference is made to NATO and UN documentation, in particular the Srebrenica Report, parliamentary records, memoirs of key players,

¹ See, for instance, the views of the departing UNPROFOR Commander Jean Cot: 'I have asked for numerous reforms of the UN structure in Yugoslavia [*sic*], especially in the use of information, the capacity to analyse and reflect and the use of supporting force'. Cot said his disagreement with the UN Secretary-General over air support for troops in Bosnia was only the tip of the iceberg. 'In the case of a massive attack on a safe area, or anywhere else, the only means of immediate response is the policy of close air support, on the condition that we can react immediately...[which] means three minutes...certainly not three hours'. General Francis Briquemont, General Rose's predecessor, also left his post early, reportedly due to frustration at UN failure in Bosnia. *Guardian*, January 25, 1994, p.9.

including the CD-ROM COREUs² reproduced by David Owen, academic analyses, and local and international media coverage.

It concludes that Britain, through its politicians, and military and diplomatic representatives, played a major role in blocking effective military action by NATO to preempt or halt Serb attacks on the UN 'safe areas' in Bosnia-Herzegovina, thereby facilitating the territorial and political objectives of the Serb leadership in Pale and Belgrade, and contributing to the consolidation of Serb-held territory in Bosnia. The relative impunity with which international actors, led by Britain, met the VRS incursions into the 'safe areas' also inspired confidence amongst Serb leaders to pursue their mission, especially in the eastern enclaves resulting, the following year, in the worst atrocity in Europe since 1945.

Markale Massacre. Sarajevo, February 1994

On February 5, a mortar bomb exploded on the Markale market place in Sarajevo, killing 68 people and wounding over 200.³ The international response to this incident is assessed here at diplomatic, military and political level, with particular reference to the part played by the newly-appointed British UN Commander, Gen-Lt. Sir Michael Rose, in co-ordination with other UN officials, including the UN Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG), Yasushi Akashi, and the ICFY Co-Chairs, David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg. The conclusion drawn is that Britain's response to the massacre diverged substantially from that of other major western countries and most NATO member states, and contributed to undermining NATO authority.

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² Official telegrams between EC/EU capitals, available on line on the University of Liverpool website.

³ The incident followed a Serb mortar attack the previous day which had killed ten civilians in the Dobrinja district of Sarajevo.

Lt. General Sir Michael Rose arrived in Bosnia on January 25, assuming the UN Command in Bosnia from the Belgian General, Francis Briquemont.⁴ Having spent the previous year as Deputy Force Commander overseeing the UK contribution to the UN mission in former Yugoslavia, and visiting Bosnia on several occasions, General Rose was familiar with the situation there.⁵

On February 6, the day after the Markale massacre, the UN Secretary-General wrote to the Secretary-General of NATO requesting:

at the earliest possible date, a decision by the North Atlantic Council to authorize the Commander-in-Chief of NATO's Southern Command to launch air strikes, at the request of the United Nations, against artillery or mortar positions in or around Sarajevo which are determined by UNPROFOR to be responsible for attacks against civilian targets in that city.⁶

On February 9, the North Atlantic Council met and formally agreed to issue a 10-day ultimatum, with a 20km exclusion zone around Sarajevo which required the withdrawal, or regrouping and placing under UNPROFOR control, of all heavy weaponry (including that of the Bosnian government forces) within the area, cautioning that heavy weapons found within the exclusion zone after that date, along with their military support facilities, would be subject to air strikes.⁷

⁴ In an interview with a Sarajevo newspaper on the eve of his departure, General Briquemont declared that 'if the existing logic of war is not stopped, it will be catastrophic for Europe...it is absolutely incredible that politicians, particularly those on the international scene, give themselves the right to determine military and non-military objectives and then are not willing to secure the necessary conditions so that we may fulfill these objectives'. *Oslobodjenje*, European edition, February 11, 1994, p.9.

⁵ *Fighting for Peace*, General Sir Michael Rose, Harvill, 1998, p.11.

⁶ S/1994/131, quoted from the *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.28/117.

⁷ A 'Declaration the previous month by Heads of State and Government of the North Atlantic Council' had already reaffirmed NATO's readiness 'to carry out air strikes in order to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the safe areas and other threatened areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina'. Ibid. p.29/126.

In the prelude to the announcement of the NATO ultimatum General Rose, assisted by Lord Owen, undertook a number of initiatives which, both separately and jointly, acted to dilute the impact of that ultimatum.

Firstly, on the day after the Markale massacre, General Rose travelled to Belgrade with Yasushi Akashi to meet Serbian President Milosevic and Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic for the purpose of securing Karadzic's agreement to the removal of Serb heavy weaponry to a 20-km distance from Sarajevo,⁸ which was intended, however, as part of a general demilitarisation programme.⁹ Since the demilitarisation of Sarajevo, without the firm guarantee of UN protection, could produce a counter-productive effect by exposing the 'safe areas' and their population to greater danger, and since it did not form part of the NATO ultimatum, such a proposal was unlikely to have been acceptable to the Bosnian government. The reason General Rose later offered for his unilateral - and apparently unsolicited - approach was that

because of lack of agreement about what ought to be done, it was left to the beleaguered UN to continue with the peacekeeping mission as best it could, using the traditional weapons of persuasion, patience and persistence...The decision by the international community not to take military action in Bosnia allowed propagandists around the world to condemn the West for letting the wicked go unpunished.¹⁰

This statement not only contradicted the UN Secretary-General's letter of February 6, but also ignored the majority view within NATO and the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), which supported NATO air strikes.¹¹ In short, the British UN Commander in Bosnia, just two weeks in office,

⁸ Karadzic had already been briefed by Lord Owen on February 6 in Zvornik, where his agreement was sought on the general demilitarisation of Sarajevo, which included the full removal of all Bosnian Army units. OWEN, op.cit. p.256.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ROSE, op.cit. p.45.

¹¹ Owen records the FAC debate on air strikes. OWEN, op.cit. p.257-260.

had assumed an active role in international diplomacy which diverged from the position of (a) the UN Secretary-General,¹² (b) the vast majority at the North Atlantic Council,¹³ and (c) the EC Foreign Affairs Council. Rose also publicly opposed NATO intervention on the grounds that it might 'drag the UN into war', expressing this view through his spokesperson and in personal interviews on British television.¹⁴

Secondly, on General Rose's orders, a so-called 'UK eyes only' paper was compiled by the UN office in Sarajevo, in order to persuade the British Defence Secretary against "abandoning peacekeeping for war-fighting."¹⁵ This was done on the advice of the Ministry of Defence, having informed Rose's office in Sarajevo that Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind on his return from Bosnia, was bowing to US and NATO pressure for the wider use of NATO air power.¹⁶ According to Rose, this paper convinced Rifkind to stand firm against the Americans.¹⁷

A third initiative on the part of General Rose, following on from the understanding reached with Karadzic on February 6, was to set up parallel agreements with Bosnian Serb and Government leaders for (i) a ceasefire, (ii) a withdrawal of all heavy weapons from a 20-km circle

¹² SRSG Yasushi Akashi, who consulted closely with a policy advisory team in Zagreb, however, liaised with General Rose to resolve the crisis without resort to air strikes. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.32/139. For discussion of Boutros Boutros-Ghali's somewhat ambiguous stance, displayed in letters written to the Security Council and to the NATO Secretary-General, see *Le Monde*, February 8, 1994, p.5.

¹³ The only NATO member to abstain from the final vote in favour of air strikes was Greece.

¹⁴ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.28/118. Rose commented that 'this continual discussion of air strikes is not addressing the main issue'. *BBC Newsnight*, February 9, 1994. Three days later, Rose's spokesman, Lt. Col. Bill Aikman, provoked some consternation amongst western leaders through remarking that the NATO deadline was not General Rose's personal deadline. *BBC Newsnight*, February 12, 1994.

¹⁵ ROSE, op.cit. p.46.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

around Sarajevo, (iii) the positioning of UN troops between the lines of conflict and, (iv) the establishment of a joint commission to oversee the withdrawal of heavy weapons. These were terms already agreed in principle with the Bosnian Serb leader but, since they did not include punitive measures for non-compliance, undercut the NATO initiative.

The draft agreement was presented to Jovan Divjak, the Deputy Bosnian Army Commander (himself a Serb), on February 9, the same day as the NATO summit. Divjak, not surprisingly, was reluctant to sign, both because of the anticipated NATO ultimatum, and on the grounds that the UN proposal, since it was not linked to the threat of force, was not (in view of the VRS past track record) likely to be adhered to, whereupon Rose threatened Divjak that failure to sign would lead to the media being informed that the mortar had come from the Bosnian side.¹⁸ The procedure Rose adopted to force the Bosnian government into signing the agreement involved, on his own admission, a degree of physical man-handling, in addition to coercion.¹⁹

The source of the mortar shell, especially in light of the fact that it prompted a review of international policy in Bosnia, has since been the subject of much controversy. While the western media and, indeed, international institutions, were quick to attribute it to Serb forces, both because the Dobrinja mortar the previous day had indisputably come from the Serb side, and because the victims were mainly Muslim, there remained nonetheless some doubt as to its origins. Two on-the-spot investigations were carried out, one immediately after the incident, with a subsequent investigation ordered by UN envoy Akashi. Both reached the same conclusion, namely, that it was impossible to assess from where the mortar had been fired. The UN Secretary-General later wrote to the Security Council that, on the evidence submitted by the

¹⁸ Ibid. p.48

¹⁹ 'Seizing Divjak's arm...I shouted at him...[n]ot even allowing him to get his coat, I bundled him into the Range Rover...' Ibid. p.49-50.

UNPROFOR investigation 'the mortar bomb in question could...have been fired by either side'.²⁰ In fact, in evidence at the trial of Stanislav Galic, Serb Commander of the Romania district, General Rose admitted under questioning that the mortar had probably come from the north-east (i.e. Serb-held territory).²¹

When meeting with Bosnian General Divjak, and the following day with Bosnian President Izetbegovic, however, General Rose offered a different version of the incident, not corroborated by evidence in his possession at the time or, indeed, after the second investigation.²² Despite this, according to Owen's memoirs, some UNPROFOR documents stating that the mortar had been fired "some 1-1.5km inside the territory under Moslem control" were leaked by "highly reliable and confidential sources within UNPROFOR's HQ who wished to remain anonymous" to the Serbian news agency, Tanjug, which carried the story on February 8.²³ Although the story was without basis, the leaked documents may well have been a contributing factor in persuading the Bosnian government to agree to General Rose's terms. Undoubtedly, a press conference announcement, alleging that the responsibility for the mortar lay with the Bosnians who proposed to reject the UN peace proposals, would have severely compromised the Bosnian government position. Under pressure, the Bosnian President signed the agreement. A comment by Russian UN officer Viktor Andreev, on the way to the airport to clinch the deal, was prescient:

²⁰ S/1994.182, February 16, 1994.

²¹ The Bosnian Serb Army held territory North North-East at Spicasta Stijena and Mrkovici. Evidence by General Sir Michael Rose at the trial of General Stanislav Galic, Case Number IT-98-29-T, page 10196, *ICTY*, June 20, 2002. See also excerpt from TODOROVIC, Dragoljub. *Burden of Crime: National Courts and Justice*, quoted on Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia website.

²² More recently, it has emerged that the Bosnian Serb military, through a nominee, were involved in the second mortar investigation. Galic trial, *ICTY*, op.cit. pages 10266-8.

²³ COREU ref. CO94B12B.PAR. Owen himself maintained that the mortar had come from Bosnian government positions.

I like this British form of diplomacy; it reminds me of the way we used to do things in the Soviet Union.²⁴

General Rose described the airport agreement as marking the beginning of the end of the 'civil' war in Bosnia. Yet the war continued for a further 18 months. What the airport agreement succeeded in doing was to compromise the NATO ultimatum by demonstrating to the Serbs that at least one Permanent Member of Security Council was not behind it. Serb leaders thereafter used the doubts arising from the conflicting information over responsibility for the massacre as an excuse to ignore the NATO ultimatum.

According to General Rose, it was Lt. Gen. Rupert Smith (later to succeed Rose as UN Commander in Bosnia) who managed, on Rose's request, to align the timetable of NATO's proposal with that of the UN,²⁵ the main difference being that in the latter the threat of military action was omitted. The fact that General Smith, who then worked in the operations branch of the Ministry of Defence, was successful in introducing the necessary clauses into the NATO document, gave some indication of the degree of influence Britain wielded within the higher echelons of NATO. The short-term outcome of the parallel UN-negotiated agreement, and indeed its purpose, was 'not to allow the UN peace process in Bosnia to be hijacked by NATO'.²⁶

Lord Owen played a pivotal part in General Rose's bid to secure a separate UN agreement for Sarajevo. On February 6, at the request of the Foreign Secretary, the RAF made a plane available to fly Owen and Thorwald Stoltenberg to Belgrade where they met for five hours with

²⁴ ROSE, p.51.

²⁵ Ibid. p.51-2.

²⁶ ROSE, op.cit. p.51.

Bosnian Serb leaders Karadzic, Krajisnik and Koljevic, and with Milosevic the following day. According to Owen, the Bosnian Serbs were ready to negotiate for UN administration and the demilitarization of Sarajevo prior to a final settlement for Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁷ On February 7, Owen and Stoltenberg presented a 6-point plan to the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, which included the demilitarisation of Sarajevo. This was strongly opposed by French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe who, supported by the several other EU states, and EC Foreign Affairs Commissioner Van de Broek, pressed for the immediate announcement of a NATO ultimatum, and the imposition of a 30km exclusion zone around Sarajevo.²⁸ Juppe's proposal was accepted, although the exclusion zone was later reduced to 20 km, following an intervention by Lord Owen.²⁹ Owen, meanwhile, as he put it, won 'two more crucial days' negotiating time for the UN, which General Rose proceeded to use to great effect'.³⁰

On February 9, Owen and Stoltenberg met with the foreign ministers of neighbouring states: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania and Hungary.³¹ According to Owen, the ministers present discussed how regional countries could influence a settlement, in particular through offering economic, political and security perspectives to the Bosnian government. Owen's main purpose at that meeting appeared to be to secure support from the neighbouring countries for the removal of

²⁷ Ref.CO94B07.PAR.

²⁸ OWEN, op.cit. p.257-9. The purpose of the air strikes, according to French Defence Minister Leotard and French Foreign Minister Juppe, was to end the siege of Sarajevo. See *Le Monde*, February 8, 1994, p.1.

²⁹ 'On...8 February I wrote to Douglas Hurd querying the US objection to demilitarization and arguing for an exclusion zone smaller than the 30 km radius advocated by the French...' OWEN, op.cit. p.260.

³⁰ '...it looked as if we might get what the UN desperately wanted - a negotiated agreement before the NAC met'. Ibid. p.259-60.

³¹ Turkish Foreign Minister Cetin remained in Ankara to monitor developments at the NATO summit. Ibid.

sanctions from Serbia,³² as well as for 'regional disarmament',³³ indirectly facilitating General Rose's negotiations for the general disarmament of Sarajevo.

The day after General Rose insinuated that the mortar responsible for the Markale market massacre had come from the Bosnian government side, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, during talks with both sides led by the ICFY in Geneva, pressed for a special commission to investigate the origin of the mortar. Karadzic meanwhile used this uncertainty as a pretext for not complying with the NATO ultimatum, alleging it was imposed on erroneous assumptions.³⁴ Meanwhile, as Rose had anticipated, Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic insisted that demilitarisation could only be addressed once the Serb withdrawal was complete, *and* in the context of an overall agreement.³⁵

British ministers publicly endorsed the NATO initiative,³⁶ while privately encouraging the parallel peace negotiations through the UN, thereby adulterating the impact of the NATO deadline.³⁷ The first ministerial statement in the House of Commons on February 7, just two days after the mortar attack, was by a junior foreign minister, Alastair Goodlad. On February 8, in the House of Commons, Defence Secretary Malcolm

³² Owen stressed the support of regional countries in agreeing that 'the EU sanctions policy can be further refined'. COREU from Lord Owen. 'Bosnia: 10-Day Immovable Deadline'. Ref.CO94B10B.PAR.

³³ Owen's conclusions that regional disarmament should be 'a high priority' were linked to ministers' 'worries of a regional arms race'. COREU, February 9, 1994, from the Office of the Co-Chairmen. Ref.CO94B09.PAR.

³⁴ NATO leaders had been careful, however, not to link the ultimatum to the Markale incident.

³⁵ COREU, February 10, 1994. Bosnia Talks, Geneva. Ref.CO94B10.PAR.

³⁶ Douglas Hurd, however, advised 'extreme prudence' at the first NATO meeting. *Le Monde*, February 8, 1994, p.4. Later, he attempted to have the word 'ultimatum' omitted from the NATO declaration. *Le Monde*, February 10, 1994, p.3.

³⁷ Douglas Hurd arranged for an RAF plane to fly Owen and Stoltenberg to Belgrade to negotiate with Milosevic, and reportedly 'felt that nothing [the Security Council or North Atlantic Council] were contemplating conflicted with our strategy'. OWEN, op.cit. p.256.

Rifkind pointed to the danger of threatening air strikes against the Serbs:

I hope that the whole House will agree that it would be unwise to follow any initiative which would put in jeopardy [the continuation of aid and British forces' safety].³⁸

General Rose's paper, written the previous night on MOD advice, had apparently succeeded in its objectives. The Prime Minister held a similar view, expressing a preference for tactical, rather than strategic, air support, and making no reference to lifting the Sarajevo siege:

If we use air power, we must be clear about the objectives of that action. The aim must be to reinforce pressure to end the bombardment of Sarajevo.³⁹

On February 10, the Foreign Secretary made a statement on Sarajevo, commending the work of Lord Owen and Thorwald Stoltenberg, while also confirming British support for the NATO ultimatum. He explained his reasons:

There is a strong British interest in maintaining the strength and solidarity of NATO... We judge that these interests... are best sustained by supporting the NATO decision and working for its success.⁴⁰

Explaining why such action had not been supported eighteen months earlier, Douglas Hurd stated that only now did

the benefit of proceeding [outweigh] the risk of proceeding... If we had frustrated yesterday's decision, I do not doubt that we would have administered to ourselves - to our own defence policy - a severe shock.⁴¹

³⁸ *Oral Answers, Hansard*, Vol.237, February 8, 1994, c.128.

³⁹ *Oral Answers, Ibid.* c.138.

⁴⁰ *Air Strikes (Bosnia), Hansard*, Vol.237, February 10, 1994, c.447-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* c.449-450, and c.453.

A more serious consideration in this instance which the Foreign Secretary, interestingly, omitted to mention was the position of France which had unexpectedly taken a firm lead in the call for a robust response by NATO.⁴² French support had been crucial to Britain's policy in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina from the outset, and Britain could not now risk semi-isolation on the Security Council, with Russia the only 'P5' Member likely to offer support.⁴³ Also, as a major power within the Alliance, Britain could not afford to be side-lined within NATO.⁴⁴

Russia at this time was seeking to reaffirm its major power role in international affairs. President Yeltsin endeavoured to strike a balance with the 'moderates' who sought accommodation with the West, while not alienating nationalists like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy who now had considerable influence in the *Duma* following the December elections. As anticipated, responses from the Russian leadership to the NATO ultimatum were mixed. While Russia's Ambassador to the UN, Yuri Vorontsev, appeared to support the decision, others vocally opposed it.⁴⁵

The Prime Minister, together with the Foreign Secretary, visited Moscow between February 14-16.⁴⁶ On February 16, Russia agreed to redeploy 400 of its UN troops stationed in Croatia to Sarajevo, apparently without informing the United States, where the reaction was reserved.⁴⁷ The next

⁴² A major French concern would have been the security situation in Sarajevo, where 75% of the UN troops deployed were French. *Le Monde*, February 8, 1994, p.4.

⁴³ China still continued to maintain a neutral position at this time.

⁴⁴ Greece was the only NATO member to withhold consent for the NATO ultimatum.

⁴⁵ 'Who says we're stopping anything?' - Vorontsev, *Channel 4 News*, February 8, 1994. See also *Le Monde*, February 12, 1994, p.3, and 'Bombing Serb positions with NATO planes ...could deal a psychological blow to [the Partnership for Peace]'. Vyacheslav Kostikov, *Interfax*.

⁴⁶ There was an agreement to detarget by May all British and Russian nuclear weapons away from each other's country, and have joint military exercises in Russia and UK by 1995.

⁴⁷ OWEN, op.cit. p.267.

day, as the decision was publicly announced, the troops arrived in the Bosnian Serb headquarters at Pale, brandishing the Serb three-finger salute. It was not clarified to what degree the Prime Minister's visit influenced the Russians to reverse their decision,⁴⁸ although Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind indicated that John Major had been informed of the anticipated move whilst in Moscow.⁴⁹ The new situation was a major diplomatic and political scoop for Russia. It also boosted the Bosnian Serb leader's disregard of NATO,⁵⁰ and assisted the British bid to avert air strikes. Russia now played a pivotal role in the UNPROFOR operation around Sarajevo and, by the very presence of its troops, virtually precluded NATO intervention, regardless of whether the terms of the NATO ultimatum had been met.⁵¹ As Vyacheslav Kostikov, Yeltsin's spokesman stated,

not only has Russia returned to its roots in its historical policy and role in the Balkans and defended the Serbs, its fellows in faith, culture and national spirit, but it firmly defined the parameters of its influence in Europe and the world.⁵²

The Bosnian government was not reassured by the arrival of Russian troops since they had pre-empted the NATO ultimatum and, even on arrival, displayed partisanship towards the Serbs, in Bosnian eyes rendering their mission suspect.⁵³ According to Bosnia's ambassador at

⁴⁸ According to John Reid, then opposition defence spokesperson, who broke the news of the Russian decision to the House of Commons, the Russians had made arrangements directly with the Serbs. *Royal Navy*. *Hansard*, Vol.237, February 17, 1994, c.1150.

⁴⁹ Interview with Malcolm Rifkind, *BBC Newsnight*, February 17, 1994.

⁵⁰ Radovan Karadzic declared the following day that 'we take no notice of NATO. We work with the UN'. *Channel 4 News*, February 18, 1994.

⁵¹ Jonathan Eyal commented on the importance of the Russian move which, he considered, demonstrated that Russia had refused to accept NATO was the only actor in their own sphere of interest. 'Either they drop bombs and risk a much wider rift between Russia and the West, or they desist from it, probably for ever'. Jonathan Eyal, *Channel 4 News*, Ibid.

⁵² *Guardian*, February 23, 1994.

⁵³ Interviews with Bosnian Foreign Minister Irfan Ljubjankic, and Bosnian Army General Arif Pasalic, *Channel 4 News*, February 18, 1994, and *Independent*, February 21, 1994.

the UN, Mohamed Sacirbey, the Russian troops would merely freeze the status quo.⁵⁴

In the event, the NATO ultimatum was not fulfilled as required. Akashi at the time attributed this to delays caused by snowstorms. Even before the NATO deadline expired, General Rose announced that NATO air strikes would not be necessary since the heavy weaponry of both parties was effectively under UN control. This was not so, however, as confirmed a few weeks later when General Mladic's forces were able, without difficulty, to remove much of their equipment in preparation for a new offensive on Gorazde.⁵⁵ On February 26, UNPROFOR spokesperson Bill Aikman reported at least six tanks being removed by Bosnian Serbs from the exclusion zone around Sarajevo in violation of the NATO ultimatum.⁵⁶ Aikman conceded that at least eight weapons sites had not yet been checked one week after the expiry of the NATO deadline, and that at other sites Bosnian Serbs were refusing to hand over heavy armoury to UNPROFOR.⁵⁷

Since relative peace prevailed in Sarajevo for some months following that episode, the fact that the NATO ultimatum had been foiled was not immediately apparent to many observers. The combined efforts of the UN Command in Sarajevo, the co-chairs of the ICFY, the Bosnian Serb leadership in Pale and President Milosevic in Belgrade, however, with the full endorsement of the British and Russian governments, had managed to create a status quo in Sarajevo which effectively precluded NATO air strikes there for over a year, while the city remained under siege.

⁵⁴ *Le Monde*, February 19, 1994. p.3.

⁵⁵ Lord Owen's observation is instructive here. He comments that on the second day of the Geneva peace talks (February 11) the Serbs 'seem happy to tie UN down to patrolling confrontation line and controlling unwanted heavy weapons while removing the best of the equipment out of the exclusion zone'. COREU, February 12, 1994. Ref. CO94B12.PAR.

⁵⁶ Reuters report, February 28, 1994. *IHRL Sarajevo Source File*. February 1994.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, the lax UN monitoring of the exclusion zone around Sarajevo allowed Serb heavy weaponry to be withdrawn for use in other 'safe areas'. Gorazde and Bihac subsequently endured major Serb offensives with, as on previous occasions, relative impunity.

The assault on Gorazde

Gorazde was one of six Bosnian towns designated as a 'safe area' which, according to UN Security Council Resolution 824 (May 6, 1993) "should be free from armed attacks or any other hostile act." On March 31, a joint major three-pronged assault by Serbs from Bosnia and Serbia was launched on Gorazde lasting several weeks.⁵⁸ During that time over 700, mainly civilians, died and nearly 2,000 were wounded.⁵⁹ Apart from eight unarmed military observers, there was no UN presence in the enclave.⁶⁰ The events of Gorazde during April 1994 illustrate the power vacuum created by conflicting policies at international level,⁶¹ giving rise to friction between NATO and the UN, and amongst major world powers, which facilitated the Bosnian Serb endeavour to secure international

⁵⁸ The attack came from Ustipraca in the East, Foca in the South and Cajnica in the South East. Evidence suggests that the whole operation was planned in Belgrade. From early April 1994 till the NATO ultimatum of 22 April, heavy artillery troops disguised as 'volunteers', demolition squads and armed police from Serbia were involved in the assault. The Yugoslav Army (VJ) despatched special squads of its 63rd Paratroop Brigade based in Nis to the Bosnian Serbs, provided helicopters to enable the special forces' squads to reach Gorazde, and sent a tank battalion and a mixed artillery battalion from the 37th Army Corps in Uzice, Serbia, which crossed into Bosnia in mid-March and took up positions at the eastern and south eastern edge of the town. The silence on the Belgrade role, maintained by the UN and western governments, particularly Britain and France was, according to independent sources, to protect the international peace negotiations, where Serbian President Milosevic was a key player. See GUTMAN, Roy, 'West Keeps Serb Secret'. *Newsday*, July 3, 1994.

⁵⁹ . 'Some 700 people were killed during the offensive and some 1,970 wounded. During this and previous offensives, the town suffered damage to 80% of its buildings.' *Annual Report of the International Helsinki Federation*, Vienna 1995, p.34.

⁶⁰ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.30/127. See also SIMMS, op.cit. pp.189-195, for General Rose's role in Gorazde.

⁶¹ See *Le Monde*, April 7, p.3, and April 8, 1994, p.5.

acceptance of its encroachment into the UN 'safe area'.⁶² The episode also exposed anomalies inherent in both the 'safe areas' policy and the entire UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia and Croatia.

This section traces the specific role of the British government and its proxies in neutralising NATO, advancing Serb strategic interests around Gorazde and prolonging the siege, and seeks to cut through some of the half-truths, omissions and distortions which have permeated much of the reporting and later analysis of that crisis.

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Although a relatively small town, Gorazde was of considerable importance to the Serbs. Its strategic position on the Drina river made it important for trade and manufacturing, and before the war its munitions factory *Pobjeda* produced most of the explosive caps for the Yugoslav armaments industry.⁶³ Gorazde is also a thoroughfare between the previously Muslim majority towns of Visegrad and Foca, and links Belgrade with Dubrovnik on the Adriatic coast. In early 1994, the Serbs began building a road by-passing Gorazde, which the Bosnians attempted to block, viewing it as further threatening the survival of non-Serbs in Eastern Bosnia. Gorazde depended for its defence entirely on the Bosnian army. No goods or people entered the enclave without the express permission of the Serb forces, resulting in a steady erosion of basic necessities over a period of more than two years."⁶⁴

⁶² As the French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppe, commented at the time: 'As long as there is no common position between the US, the UN, the EC and Russia, we allow the Serbs to play their double game'. *Independent*, April 19, 1994, p.9.

⁶³ Milos Vasic, *Vreme*, April 18, 1994.

⁶⁴ *UN Information Notes*, March, 1994. One UNHCR field officer reported: 'I have seen people gather wheatflour [a mixture of mud and flour] from airdrops with spoons from the mud...Out of four families in a certain area of the enclave, three were completely out of food'. *Ibid.* February, 1994.

General Rose played down the Serb offensive on Gorazde from the outset. Dismissing it as an isolated military manoeuvre, he opined that 'nobody has the strength to make major changes in the strategic situation', and attempted to halt the offensive through brokering a cease-fire.⁶⁵ This approach took no account of reports from UNHCR, UN military observers (UNMOs) and the *Medicins sans Frontieres* team in the enclave, or even to declarations by Serbian army officers.⁶⁶ In fact, a document leaked on April 7 revealed that accounts from UNMOs in the enclave, transmitted to the UN Command at Sarajevo, differed markedly from the information General Rose was giving the press:

From the BBC World Service news of 5 April, we heard an UNPROFOR assessment that the attack into Gorazde was a minor affair into a limited area. We do not concur with that position. It is a grave situation...Saying it is a minor attack into a limited area is a bad assessment, incorrect and shows absolutely no understanding of what is going on here.⁶⁷

Although he acknowledged that the Serbs had used the negotiations as a cover for their offensive,⁶⁸ Rose refuted the UNMO report, arguing that 'no serious attempt had been made by the Serbs to overrun [the enclave] or to capture the town. Nor did the Serbs ever try to achieve these goals'.⁶⁹ In his memoirs, Rose also sought to discredit the UNMOs themselves: 'I had suspected from the emotional tone of their reporting that they had ceased to function as a disciplined military unit'.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ In his memoirs, Rose comments that the cease-fire proposals produced by General Mladic were 'surprisingly coherent and not too far removed from our own'. ROSE, op.cit. p.105, and *The Times*, April 16, 1994, p.1.

⁶⁶ Col. Novica Gusic stated in early April, 'we are starting a counter attack with the idea of recapturing Serb land in the region of Gorazde', and in a statement to Radio Montenegro on April 8, General Valdo Spremo declared 'we will soon capture the whole area around Gorazde and so set up control on both sides of the Drina River'. *Vreme*, April 18, 1994, Ibid.

⁶⁷ Cited in ROSE, op.cit. p.103.

⁶⁸ *Independent*, April 20, 1994, p.10.

⁶⁹ ROSE, op.cit. p.103.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p.120.

Later, it was generally acknowledged that the UN Commander in Sarajevo had misjudged the situation in Gorazde. The UN Secretary-General later recorded that

The United Nations military observers, supported by UNHCR, believed that the Bosniacs were defeated and that the Serbs, taking advantage of their military superiority, were subjecting the civilian population of Gorazde to heavy bombardment. The UNPROFOR Commander, supported by a small team of British observers then present in the enclave, believed, as he has since written in his memoirs, that "the Bosnian Army had probably retreated in order to embroil the United Nations and NATO in the war...In the narrow passes and ravines anyone could have stopped the [Serb] tanks with a crowbar...the Bosnians had turned and run, leaving the United Nations to pick up the pieces".⁷¹

Many British commentators, however, perhaps with Rose's 'success' in Sarajevo still uppermost in their minds, tended to regard his failure to act promptly to deter the assault on Gorazde simply as a reflection of the general's concern to prevent UNPROFOR being drawn from a 'peacekeeping' role to one of peace enforcement.⁷² While this was clearly a consideration,⁷³ the misleading signals conveyed by General Rose's erroneous assessment provoked contradictory reactions to the crisis from senior US politicians, with serious implications for international policy, as discussed further on.

⁷¹ *Srebrenica Report*, Ibid. p.31/137. Gorazde was defended by about 4,000 Bosnians, against an estimated 12-15,000 Serbs with tanks and heavy artillery. In response to General Rose's remark, one of the town's defenders, a 20-year old evacuee from Gorazde with a bullet lodged in his hip, commented: 'We may as well have been dolls for all the defence we could have put up against a tank...[with] one Kalashnikov between four men on the front line'. The town's last defence had been petrol bombs made from bottles filled with benzene, oil, sand and ash which, to have any effect, would have needed to be thrown within 10 feet of an oncoming tank. *Guardian*, April 29, 1994.

⁷² See, for instance, Ian Traynor in *Guardian*, and John Keegan in *Daily Telegraph*, April 12, 1994.

⁷³ Rose wrote to the UN headquarters on April 8, 1994, stating that 'by choosing the "light option" with respect to force levels, the international community had accepted that the safe areas would be established by agreement as opposed to force. This choice, he maintained, was a clear rejection of a policy of peace-making or peace enforcement...'. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.31/132.

By April 10, Serbs were attacking into the enclave in large numbers and, on General Rose's orders, two token NATO air attacks were launched, hitting a Serb artillery bunker on the first day, and a Serb tank and an armoured personnel carrier on the next.⁷⁴ Rose made it clear that the NATO action was to deter further attacks on UN positions, not to protect the civilians of Gorazde, which he never saw as his mission. Over the days following, a pattern emerged, with the Serb forces pausing after each NATO strike, and resuming their offensive once the NATO military threat appeared to subside. The limited NATO 'close air support' did not, as has been claimed, act as a warning signal to the Serbs, but rather demonstrated the limits of NATO intervention.

On April 14, the Serbs took over 200 UN personnel hostages, including a 53-strong complement of UN military observers (most of whom had been guarding Serb heavy weapons' collection points over Sarajevo), while simultaneously ordering an artillery and mortar attack on another 'safe' area, Tuzla. Molotov cocktails exploded outside the UNHCR building in Belgrade, a number of foreign journalists had their accreditation withdrawn, and the movements of UN staff in Pale and Banja Luka became strictly curtailed. On the same day, the Bosnian defence line broke and the Serb forces approached a built-up area of Gorazde, at which point the divisions within the UN, in interpreting the situation on the ground, intensified. In a demonstration of disdain for the UN and NATO, Karadzic and Mladic set up a chess game on the frontline, where they were filmed laughing in relaxed fashion as they played on an improvised table before the world media.⁷⁵ Divisions amongst the various international players were now also surfacing. The British used the Serb defiance to argue against the use of air power, while the US

⁷⁴ The strikes were classified by the UN as "close air support" strictly to protect UN staff endangered by Serb forces, justified by even a narrow interpretation of UNSC resolution 836.

⁷⁵ *New York Times*, April 17, 1994.

State Department and the NATO Secretary-General, Manfred Woerner, favoured more intensive NATO action.

The Serb tank assault on Bosnian army forces on April 16 resulted in two British SAS officers in Gorazde being wounded, one of them fatally. General Rose, having sought permission from the Special Representative of the Secretary General Yasushi Akashi, ordered close air support, but a British Sea Harrier jet involved in the operation was struck by a Serb surface-to-air missile. The plane crashed and the pilot ejected. A senior military officer commented: 'In an ideal situation I wouldn't even think of using a Sea Harrier for this sort of operation. It's primarily a fighter, and doesn't have the best precision bombing capability'.⁷⁶

The deep splits amongst western powers now intensified. American policy once more came under attack in Britain, in particular the US refusal to commit ground troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina. General Rose ruled out further air strikes commenting that

clearly we are not about to change the balance of forces between the warring parties by the use of strategic air power'.⁷⁷

Within the US, the Pentagon was the most consistently opposed to military intervention. Statements by US Defense Secretary William Perry and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Shalikashvili, possibly influenced by General Rose's optimistic view of the situation, also virtually foreclosing the use of force,⁷⁸ were quickly rebutted by the State

⁷⁶ NATO officials expressed concern that General Rose had asked the pilot to make several passes over the target to confirm that the targeted tank was indeed attacking, thereby exposing the aircraft to danger. NATO's Southern Command then informed General Rose that, due to the risk to the aircraft, he would approve only strategic-level, not tactical, strikes. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. pp.31-2/138.

⁷⁷ The animus between General Rose and NATO was evident from his memoirs: 'Given NATO's apparent wish to find an excuse to bomb the Serbs, [I did not] altogether trust the organisation'. ROSE, op.cit. p.123.

⁷⁸ Shalikashvili commented that 'it is our judgement that heavy weapons are not the principal cause of the death and destruction around Gorazde, it is more small-unit actions, and air power in

Department, however. US National Security Chief Tony Lake affirmed that neither the President nor any of his close collaborators excluded the use of force to end the offensive on Gorazde.⁷⁹ President Clinton expressed a personal preference for an end to the arms embargo, but confirmed that the US would not act unilaterally in the face of disapproval from France and Britain.⁸⁰ In response to the allegation that America was failing to provide leadership, Clinton commented:

I've always thought that the arms embargo operated in an entirely one-sided fashion and it still does. That's the reason we're in this fix today.⁸¹

France, as most European countries with troops on the ground in Bosnia, continued to oppose the removal of the arms embargo. Characteristically, French policy on Bosnia varied according to the situation on the ground, and its perceived national interests. The fierce polemics at the National Assembly during 1992 over military intervention subsided once the no-fly-zone was implemented the following April, and French policy was now mainly geared to the safety of its own troops on the ground. Hence the ready support and, indeed, initiation of the NATO ultimatum in Sarajevo where French troops were deployed, and the lesser degree of willingness to endorse NATO action in Gorazde, which risked rebounding on French troops elsewhere in Bosnia.⁸² Once the Serb offensive intensified, however, France did

that...case would not be nearly as effective', a view expressed earlier by General Rose. *New York Times*, April 5, 1994, p.A1. On the day prior to Perry's statement, General Rose had expressed confidence that neither the Bosnian Serbs nor the Bosnian government would seek to make 'any major strategic changes' in the Gorazde area. *Keesing's Record of World Events*, April 1994, p.39966.

⁷⁹ *Le Monde*, April 9, 1994, p.4, *New York Times*, April 5, 1994, p.A1, April 20, 1994, p.A1, and *Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 1994, p.A18.

⁸⁰ *Independent*, April 19, 1994, p.9.

⁸¹ *Daily Telegraph*, April 19, 1994, p.11.

⁸² See report on the French National Assembly debate on Gorazde in *Le Monde*, April 13, 1994, p.8.

express limited support for the use of force in Gorazde.⁸³ In Brussels, EC External Affairs Commissioner Hans Van den Broek described the Bosnian Serb actions around Gorazde as 'absolutely unacceptable' and urged 'a firm response ... by the EU and the UN', adding that easing sanctions on Serbia was 'out of the question'.⁸⁴

Russia, since establishing its new role in Bosnia in February, had taken a more active role in the region, and Russian UN Civil Adviser in Sarajevo, Viktor Andreev, worked closely with General Rose on the Gorazde crisis.⁸⁵ In an attempt to pre-empt NATO action, the Russian Balkans envoy, Vitali Churkin, secured three promises from the Serbs: to stop the shelling, to pull 3km back from the town, and to release all UN personnel. When the Serbs reneged on all three, Churkin concluded that 'the time has come for Russia to stop all discussion with the Bosnian Serbs. The time for talking is past'.⁸⁶ On April 19, Churkin indicated he would advise Yeltsin to authorise the use of force against the Serbs, and Yeltsin himself insisted that the Serbs 'had to stop attacking Gorazde and leave the town'.⁸⁷ Despite a statement by the *Duma* on April 13, denouncing the strikes as 'unilateral and unauthorised',⁸⁸ and a general preference amongst Russian leaders for a negotiated settlement, it is unlikely that Russia would have raised more than verbal protest, had the Western powers resolved to authorise more extensive NATO air power at that point. As *Sevodnya*, the Moscow paper

⁸³ *Corriere della Sera*, April 11, 1994, p.5, and *Independent*, April 21, 1994.

⁸⁴ *Guardian*, April 19, 1994, p.10.

⁸⁵ ROSE, *op.cit.* p.102.

⁸⁶ *Independent*, April 19, 1994, p.9.

⁸⁷ *Keesing*, *op.cit.* p.39967.

⁸⁸ The nationalists who dominated the Russian *Duma* after the December elections, consistently supported a stronger anti-NATO line. *European*, 22-28 April, 1994, p.1.

stated: 'Russia...has neither the strength, the money nor the opportunity for decisive military support of the Serbs'.⁸⁹

In Britain, there was relatively little opposition in either the press or parliament to government policy on the Gorazde issue. The press had attributed much of the recent success in Bosnia to General Rose's efforts, including the peace agreement forged between Bosniacs and Croats, the 'demilitarisation' of Sarajevo, and the opening of Tuzla airport. It only later became evident that Sarajevo had not been demilitarised, and Tuzla airport still remained closed to civilian traffic. Neither had Britain contributed significantly to the US-brokered Bosniac/Croat peace agreement.⁹⁰

In the House of Commons, there were three ministerial statements during the Gorazde crisis, the first by the Foreign Secretary on April 12 who confirmed that close air support had been requested by General Rose to protect UN personnel. While acknowledging the responsibility of the Bosnian Serbs, Douglas Hurd did not condemn the aggression, stating merely that '[UNPROFOR] does not intend to be drawn into open-ended intervention for or against any of the parties'.⁹¹ Asked by a Labour backbencher to confirm 'that UN Security Council resolutions already authorised the use of force to protect the safe areas themselves, and not just the UN forces in those areas', the Foreign Secretary declined to be drawn, merely commenting that Security Council resolution 836 offered 'considerable scope'.⁹² A Conservative MP seeking the Foreign Secretary's agreement that 'it is inconceivable that the United Nations, having

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ US-led negotiations between the Bosnian government and Bosnian Croat leaders led to the end of the Muslim-Croat war and the establishment of a Federation in March 1994.

⁹¹ Douglas Hurd, *Gorazde*, *Hansard*, Vol.241, April 12, 1994, c.21-22. Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind on the same day confirmed that it was "crucial to the authority of the UN and its forces...to remain bipartisan". *Oral Answers*, *Hansard*, Vol.241, April 12, 1994, c.12.

⁹² Ibid. c.25-26.

declared a safe area, could allow it to be overrun' was similarly referred to the resolution.⁹³ But, as Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind later remarked, 'even the very wording of resolution 836 is ambiguous'.⁹⁴

On April 18, Malcolm Rifkind read a statement to the House of Commons, informing Members of developments.⁹⁵ The statement followed the downing of a British Sea Harrier Jet, the killing of an SAS officer, and the hostage-taking of over 150 UN personnel. Despite the interim developments, the Defence Secretary avoided censuring the Bosnian Serbs.⁹⁶ Instead, he produced a misleading picture of the situation on the ground, focusing on an account of an unrelated incident in which another British soldier had been shot dead by Bosnian government staff in Sarajevo on the same day, using the incident to demonstrate that there were 'still a number of warring factions in Bosnia', and that 'a vicious civil war is taking place in Bosnia with a total of almost 200,000 heavily armed Bosnian Serb, Croat, and Muslim forces'.⁹⁷ The ploy of writing off the Serb offensive on the enclave as just one episode in a 'civil war', was used to justify the Serbs not being singled out as the offending party, and punished, and to stress the

⁹³ UNSC resolution 836 'Authorizes UNPROFOR...acting in self-defence, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas by any of the parties or to armed incursion into them'. The crucial words 'acting in self-defence' (in other words, not to defend the inhabitants of the enclaves) were inserted into the resolution at the insistence of Britain, France and Spain. See HONIG, *op.cit.* p.114.

⁹⁴ Malcolm Rifkind, *Bosnia, Hansard*, Vol.241, April 18, 1994, c.649.

⁹⁵ *Bosnia*, April 18, *Ibid.* c.641. The defence lines of the Bosnian army had also broken, the Serb forces reaching the edge of a built-up area. *Srebrenica Report*, *Ibid.* p.31/137.

⁹⁶ Throughout the world, the press condemned the capitulation of the UN and NATO before the Bosnian Serbs, Yet, in Britain which, of the outside powers, had suffered the greatest losses during that catastrophic week under the command of a British general, criticism was more muted, and substantially directed towards the 'international' (i.e. American) failure to provide more troops to protect the enclave.

⁹⁷ *Bosnia, Hansard*, *op.cit.* c.642, 651 and 656. Although Rifkind pointed out that the second British soldier was 'off duty and wearing plain clothes at the time', he did not inform the House that the soldier had been out during a curfew and that when asked to identify himself at the Bosnian checkpoint he ran off, which was the point at which he had been shot. *Daily Telegraph*, April 18, 1994.

difficult circumstances under which General Rose was working. At the same time, it forestalled any speculation on General Rose's judgment. Minutes later, the Defence Secretary, in apparent contradiction, pointed out that '[m]uch has been achieved, not only in the Sarajevo area, but elsewhere in central Bosnia where there has been no fighting between Croat and Muslim forces for some considerable period'.⁹⁸ The views of members who challenged government policy in Bosnia were dismissed as 'respectable' but not tenable,⁹⁹ misguidedly sincere,¹⁰⁰ or 'the words of a windbag'.¹⁰¹ The frustration felt by Members of Parliament on both sides of the House at the lack of opportunity for full debate on Gorazde, - and Bosnia generally - was voiced by two MPs through a Point of Order.¹⁰²

The Shadow Defence Secretary, Dr David Clark, confirmed his party's solidarity with the government's position, choosing to focus on the US failure to meet General Rose's request for more troops to be sent.¹⁰³ The criticism of the Clinton Administration for refusing to deploy US troops on the ground before a peace settlement had been signed, indicated confused thinking, however. For, unless they were equipped and mandated to act in a combat role (and Malcolm Rifkind had reiterated on several occasions that they were not), the troops in the so-called 'safe

⁹⁸ Ibid. c.648. The return to peace in Central Bosnia, and the establishment of a Bosnian/Croat Federation, was often to be evoked by British ministers as an example of international success in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while not always acknowledging the US central role.

⁹⁹ Ibid. c.653.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. c.649.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. c.648.

¹⁰² Points of Order, *Hansard*, Vol.241, April 18, 1994.

¹⁰³ David Clark was one of several British MPs who visited Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia and Serbia at the Serbs' expense. Register of Members' Interests, *Hansard*, 1993. Following a visit to Gorazde in late 1993, he wrote an article in *The Times*, extolling 'the successful side of peacekeeping'. *The Times*, September 10, 1993, p.13, and announced in the House of Commons that 'the threat of bombing had a major effect on the Serbs', advocating a more evenhanded approach. Statement on Defence Estimates, *Hansard*, Vol.230, October 18, 1993, c.56. Clark's understanding of conditions in Gorazde contradicted UNHCR findings that 'access to Eastern Bosnian enclaves ...remains effectively blocked'. *UN Information Notes*, October, 1993.

areas' would be implicit hostages of the Bosnian Serb forces. The insistence on maintaining UN troops on the ground in a non-combat role in Bosnia was, in the circumstances, one of the main anomalies of the British policy. The Foreign Secretary was evidently aware of this, since he studiously avoided direct criticism of the US reluctance to contribute troops (unlike the Defence Secretary who frequently fell into self-contradiction on this point).

On April 18, at an EC Foreign Ministers meeting, a British/French-led consensus opted for a fresh round of diplomacy, ruling out military action to save Gorazde, with Britain in particular urging the necessity of a common front with Russia. Lord Owen was charged with coordinating efforts between the four international players, the US, the EU, Russia and the UN, to work out a diplomatic strategy to secure a ceasefire.

On April 20, President Clinton announced a new 3-point initiative which included the threat of more air strikes and tighter sanctions on Serbia. Clinton favoured extending the use of NATO air power to other 'safe' areas and, since France was now also persuaded of the need for increased air power, Britain was forced into verbally agreeing, in the interests of unity. On April 22, NATO threatened the Serbs with massive air strikes if the offensive on Gorazde continued, ordering Serb forces to withdraw two miles from the town centre by 0001 GMT on 24 April, from which time aid convoys and medical assistance teams should be free to enter and leave Gorazde unimpeded. Failing this, the commander of NATO's Southern European forces was authorised to conduct air strikes against Bosnian Serb heavy weapons and other military targets within a 12-mile radius military exclusion zone of the centre of Gorazde, from which all heavy weapons had to be removed by 0001 on Wednesday April 27. It was also unanimously agreed by NATO ambassadors in Brussels that this exclusion zone should be extended to the 'safe areas' of Bihac, Tuzla, Zepa and Srebrenica.

UN representatives, however, now sought to secure a parallel UN agreement, adopting a similar strategy to that followed in Sarajevo in February. On the same day as the NATO threat was issued, a UN team headed by SRSG Akashi negotiated a ceasefire for Gorazde with Serb leaders in Belgrade. The final draft of the Belgrade agreement, while containing some of the wording of the NATO ultimatum, differed in that the date for removal of heavy weaponry was two days later than that stipulated by NATO and (as in February) contained no threat of force, implicitly contradicting the NATO ultimatum. Rose later commented that

NATO had seriously underestimated the complicated arrangements needed to separate the Serb and Bosnian forces in the aftermath of the battle that had been raging round Gorazde...Neither army would break contact until UN troops arrived in Gorazde...From our perspective in Sarajevo, this intervention by Brussels seemed to be a tactic by the hawks in NATO to push the peacekeeping operation towards war... Everyone, including Adm. Leighton Smith in Naples, simply ignored the NATO ultimatum and stuck with the Belgrade agreement... the lasting impression given was that the international community could not get its act together. ¹⁰⁴

Once again, the UN on the ground, led by General Rose and Yasushi Akashi, had foiled, and publicly embarrassed, NATO.

On the same day, UN Security Council Resolution 913, supported by all 15 members, was passed, demanding an immediate ceasefire agreement covering Gorazde and the rest of Bosnia, and the release of UN personnel, with unimpeded freedom of movement for UN peacekeepers. The following day, an agreement was reached between UN envoy Yasushi Akashi and the Bosnian Serb authorities, with an UNPROFOR battalion deployed to Gorazde to monitor the ceasefire. Before midnight that day, a company of Ukrainians and a Nordic medical team, despatched by General Rose, entered Gorazde. A further UNPROFOR convoy including a British company from the 1st Duke of Wellington's Regiment followed the next morning. With UN forces in the enclave before the expiry of the

¹⁰⁴ ROSE, op.cit. p.118.

NATO deadline, full-scale NATO action was effectively ruled out. A French company which had also been due to go to Gorazde to command the operation, however, was at the last minute turned back on orders direct from the Elysee in Paris. In view of the circumstances in which the UN troops were being deployed, the French decision was not surprising. Unlike Britain, France was not prepared to place its troops in *de facto* hostage positions without adequate means of defending themselves, in a remote enclave which they could not leave without Serb consent. General Rose's timing was adroit, and the threat of the deterrent had been removed. Also, with the introduction of a UN buffer force between the two armies, and no restriction on the removal of the Serb heavy weaponry, the Serbs were free to conduct a new offensive elsewhere.

In the third ministerial statement to the House on Gorazde, the Foreign Secretary informed the House of the resolutions passed by the UN and NATO the previous week, and received unequivocal support from his Labour opposite number, who had apparently failed to understand the significance of the arrangement.¹⁰⁵ John Cunningham referred to the 'considerable confusion' between NATO and the UN, but appeared to view it merely in terms of 'indecision' and 'prevarication'. There was more anger than confusion within the NATO headquarters, and no indecision. NATO had been neatly foiled by the UN commander, with the support of the Foreign Office.

A number of MPs expressed concern as to whether General Rose had requested air strikes in the previous 48 hours and been refused by UN civilian head, Yasushi Akashi.¹⁰⁶ The Foreign Secretary's reply left little

¹⁰⁵ 'Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be a broad welcome for the measures that he has set out in his important statement? I welcome the fact that...there seems to be a clear political strategy agreed between the United Nations and NATO, set out in specific terms'. Jack Cunningham, *Bosnia*, *Ibid.* c.22.

¹⁰⁶ Akashi had formed a close relationship with Bosnian Serb leaders during his months in office, and was widely criticised by the United States and the Bosnian government who later refused to cooperate with him, and called for his resignation. Bosnian Serb leaders, on the other hand, defended Akashi, claiming he was a neutral representative and, in turn, Akashi was quoted as

doubt that the British General had not, despite the worsening situation in Gorazde and the demands by NATO leaders for more extensive use of air power, made any such request.¹⁰⁷ To remove any doubts as to the British position on Gorazde, Mr Hurd reiterated

we will not be involved in fighting on one side of the conflict or the other...that has been made clear time and again. We have specific objectives which we believe are necessary and justified for the international community. The conflict will not be brought to an end by military intervention from outside.¹⁰⁸

Like the Defence Secretary the previous week, Mr Hurd was careful to share out the blame:

All those concerned, whether they are Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, or adherents to the Bosnian Government, need to understand ...that at the end of the day, this horror can be brought to an end only by a negotiated settlement...¹⁰⁹

The implication behind the Foreign Secretary's words was clear, and was indeed backed by two British battalions in Gorazde as a tacit guarantee that the enclave would be safe from NATO military attack.¹¹⁰

describing Radovan Karadzic as 'a man of peace and my personal friend'. The British UN Ambassador, Sir David Hannay, made a point of publicly endorsing Akashi and, in fact, Akashi's comment that 'of course peacemakers can't do much until the people in the war are fairly exhausted' echoed similar remarks made by Lord Carrington and British ministers throughout the war. *New York Times*, April 26, 1994.

¹⁰⁷ General Rose later confirmed this. 'I was not about to allow the fate of the UN mission in Bosnia to be determined by hawks in NATO'. ROSE, op.cit. p.124.

¹⁰⁸ *Bosnia*, April 25, 1994, op.cit. c.25.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ The government had little public support for its policy, however. At the height of the Gorazde offensive, *The Independent* opened the debate to the general public with three options, to pull out the troops, take on the Serbs, or stay and seek peace. The second option -taking on the Serbs - was expressed in unequivocal terms: "The UN could ask NATO for more air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets and perhaps increase its ground force presence. It would take sides in the war on the grounds that the Serbs are the guilty party. Those in favour argue that to permit the Serbian war gains is to send a dangerous signal that the use of force can bring territorial rewards. They say the UN will lose all credibility unless it enforces its own resolutions, such as those protecting Muslim "safe areas". They say the Serbs' military prowess is exaggerated and

General Rose was not the only British official to influence policy on the ground. Nearly a year after the final rejection of the Vance-Owen Plan, Lord Owen still lingered on as EC co-chair of the ICFY, although his position was becoming increasingly tenuous. The European Parliament had, in January 1994, called for his dismissal as EC mediator in the peace process, and it had taken direct intervention from Downing Street to ensure Owen's continued presence on the Balkans' negotiating scene.¹¹¹ On March 27, as Serb forces were planning the Gorazde campaign, Lord Owen and his wife flew by helicopter from Belgrade to lunch with Milosevic and his wife, Mira Markovic, where, according to Owen, they had 'many hours ... of fascinating conversation'.¹¹² On the day after the first NATO air strike, Owen met with Bosnian Serb deputies Momcilo Krajisnik and Nikola Koljevic in Paris where he tried "to keep the Serbs within some form of negotiating framework."¹¹³ Owen's diplomatic success rate might best be measured, however, by the sequence of events following his and Stoltenberg's overnight stay in Pale as guests of the Bosnian Serb leadership on April 13/14 where, according to Owen, they sought to reassure Karadzic of the UN's neutrality. This was the day before Tuzla, another 'safe' area, was heavily shelled by Serbs, and two days before the fatal shooting of the British SAS officer in Gorazde, and the downing of the British harrier jet. As in the past, the Serbs reacted to perceived international pusillanimity by stepping up their offensive.

their conquests could be easily reversed.' In an overwhelming response, this was the option supported by more than two thirds of Independent readers. *Independent*, April 20, 1994. An opinion poll conducted in Belgium and France also reportedly showed that 70% of the public supported 'some type of radical military solution' in Bosnia. *Oslobodjenje*, European edition, February 11, 1994.

¹¹¹ In his memoirs, Owen admits the charge made by a number of European officials and others that he is too pro-Serb, but explains that this impression had been gained due to the disproportionate amount of time required to spend with the Serbs 'negotiating more territory from the Serbs for the Muslims'. OWEN, op.cit. p.252.

¹¹² Ibid. p.271.

¹¹³ Ibid.p.273.

The following week, Lord Owen submitted a 'detailed chronology of events from 10-16 April' to EU Ministers. This chronology was prepared by General Rose's staff, however, and it would appear that the main information on Gorazde available to the EU Ministers at this time emanated from British officials. At the EU Foreign Ministers' meeting on April 18, the emphasis, according to a Commons Statement by Douglas Hurd, had apparently moved away from air strikes.¹¹⁴ Lord Owen's epitaph on the Gorazde events, 'for me the main thing about Gorazde was the total perfidy of the Bosnian Serbs toward Churkin and Milosevic. I believe that relations between Karadzic and Milosevic were never the same after Gorazde'¹¹⁵ strikes an incongruous note. It also leaves unexplained the role of the 63rd Paratroop Brigade from Nis, and the 37th Army Corps from Uzice, despatched to Gorazde at the time of the crisis.

In the space of one month, VRS forces took control of significant parts of the Gorazde 'safe area', the UN and NATO had both been seriously discredited, UN staff had been held hostage throughout Serb-held territory in Bosnia, and aid convoys had to be suspended. The 'peace' proclaimed just weeks previously in Sarajevo was unraveling, while the Serb militia freely withdrew heavy weapons from compounds ostensibly under UN guard in Sarajevo. Nor was the Serb assault on Gorazde an isolated incident in Bosnia that month. Another 'safe area', Bihac, was also being heavily shelled by Serb forces, and Bosnian Muslims and Croats were expelled in large numbers from Banja Luka, Prijedor, and other northern Bosnian towns.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ At the Luxembourg summit, Hurd and Alain Juppe in particular emphasized the need to avoid escalation and the limitations of air strikes. British officials also stressed the need to preserve a common front with the Russians.

¹¹⁵ SILBER/LITTLE, *op.cit.* p.371.

¹¹⁶ *Le Monde*, April 5, 1994, p.4, and April 7, p.1 & 3.

When General Rose visited Gorazde after the crisis, he commented that 'the situation was a lot better than I had been led to believe. There was obviously damage to the town; you can't fight a battle around a town without there being damage...' He also questioned the UNHCR estimate of casualties, namely, that 715 had been killed and 1,900 wounded,¹¹⁷ quoting a Gorazde hospital doctor as stating they were exaggerated. Rose claimed that among the wounded were 'young men who hopped off the stretcher and went into town', and suggested that the Bosnian army had abandoned their positions to the Serbs, looking to the West to fight on their behalf.¹¹⁸ In a BBC Panorama documentary broadcast the following January,¹¹⁹ Rose claimed that 'practically every house in Gorazde has been damaged, but most of the damage to Gorazde was done in the fighting that had taken place here two years before, when the Bosnian Government Forces drove the Serbs from this town, and there were twelve and a half thousand Serbs at that time living there and they were all driven off.'¹²⁰ Yet, according to the 1991 census, there were only 9,840 Serbs in the whole administrative district of Gorazde, and only 5,584 in Gorazde itself.¹²¹ The only mass movement of Serbs

¹¹⁷ The Annual Report of the International Helsinki Federation states: 'Some 700 people were killed during the offensive and some 1,970 wounded. During this and previous offensives, the town suffered damage to 80% of its buildings.' *International Helsinki Federation Annual Report 1995*, Vienna 1995, p.34.

¹¹⁸ *Independent*, April 29, 1994, p.12, & *The Times*, April 29, 1994, p.13.

¹¹⁹ *BBC Panorama*, January 23, 1995.

¹²⁰ BBC transcript quoted from MALCOLM, Noel. 'Gorazde, the British Government and the Serbs'. See also MACDONALD, Calum. 'Rose-Tinted Spectacles', *Bosnia Report*, No.9. Malcolm claims that the allegation was not only made by General Rose on the BBC, but was 'repeated in a special briefing given to politicians and visiting dignitaries at the MoD, the main purpose of which was to show that the 'Muslims' were more to blame for the situation in Bosnia than the rebel Serbs'. MALCOLM, Ibid. Malcolm also alleges in an earlier article that UNPROFOR and the British Ministry of Defence were acting as conduits for Serb propaganda. 'The Whole Lot of them are Serbs'. *The Spectator*, June 10, 1994.

¹²¹ Stanovništvo Bosne I Hercegovine. Narodni sastav po naseljima, Zagreb, 1995, p.119. See *Prejudice and Plum Brandy: Tales of a Balkan Stringer*, Alec Russell, London 1993, p.279, for a first-hand, and contrasting, account of the bombardment of Gorazde in 1992, which he testifies was caused by Serb artillery bombardment.

recorded from the Gorazde area was in late August 1992, ordered by Bosnian Serb politicians.¹²²

The Gorazde crisis prompted criticism that General Rose's call for more UN troops to uphold UN resolutions had been ignored, particularly by the US which had failed to contribute any troops on the ground and was in arrears with its UN contributions, jeopardising the success of peacekeeping operations. But this argument was specious. The Serbs refused to allow UN troops into Gorazde before late April 1994 (and then only as a *quid pro quo* for the abandonment of NATO air strikes). Even when they did manage to enter the enclave, the troops were unable to offer protection to Gorazde civilians against Serb shellfire, and only limited assistance (as much as permitted by the VRS forces) in getting food and medical supplies to the area. The very presence of UN troops in the enclave, moreover, thwarted international military action to break the siege of the enclave.

The British were not the only international players with responsibility for the Serb capture of much of Gorazde. But, while the position of other major powers, even Russia, fluctuated, British policy remained consistent throughout the Gorazde crisis in seeking to preempt significant military action (namely, air strikes as opposed to close air support) to halt the offensive and force Mladic's troops to withdraw, and was, therefore, pivotal to the success of the Serb campaign. When the crisis intensified, Britain sought through diplomatic and other channels to prevent NATO air strikes, and was the only western power to place its own troops at direct risk by sending them into Gorazde, then judged one of the world's hottest war zones, surrounded by hostile Serb forces, with no exit strategy or adequate means of self-defence, a decision taken in some haste, and in an atmosphere of acute international discord, without consulting Parliament. The display of international disunity gave

¹²² *The Times*, September 3, 1992, and *International Herald Tribune*, September 19, 1992.

the Serbs manoeuvring space to exploit the situation, and pursue their objective of establishing an ethnically homogeneous Serb republic.

Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg, speaking at the Royal Institute of International Affairs the following month was, as usual, more outspoken than many of his colleagues in summarizing the Bosnian government's position.

I acknowledge this is extraordinarily unpalatable...they have to recognise military defeat when it stares them in the face, and that land has been seized by force, and there is going to have to be a degree of acquiescence in that [and] the other thing they've got to accept is that the military option has to be abandoned.¹²³

In the weeks after the Gorazde crisis, the Bosnian Serb response to the international climb-down followed a familiar pattern, demonstrating their ascendancy by flouting the UN agreement, and further obstructing the UNPROFOR and UNHCR missions. Initially, British light tanks, forming part of a multinational force to reconnoitre Gorazde, were turned back by Serbs as being 'too heavily armed',¹²⁴ and, on April 29, a further 168 British soldiers en route from Sarajevo to Gorazde were held up at Rogatica for over a week by Bosnian Serb forces. A strong protest lodged with Karadzic had no effect and, on May 4, the Bosnian Serb leader set new conditions for British troops to continue their journey to Gorazde. Ammunition and personal cameras were to be surrendered, and Serb tanks permitted through the Sarajevo exclusion zone, under UN escort. This request was granted, despite the fact that it constituted a breach of the NATO ultimatum, and assisted the Serbs in setting up a new front.¹²⁵ On May 12, six British UN soldiers from the Royal

¹²³ SHARP, Jane M O. 'Honest Broker or Perfidious Albion?', *Institute for Public Policy Research*, 1997, p.45, quoted from *Independent*, May 19, 1994.

¹²⁴ *Independent*, April 21, 1994, p.10.

¹²⁵ On May 7, a Bosnian Serb tank disappeared from UN surveillance between Pale and Lukavica. UN military observers following the tank were obstructed by Serb forces and lost it. Several more

Engineers were forced at gunpoint to hand over their weapons to Serbs en route to Gorazde, and their commander forced to read out a prepared statement.¹²⁶ The UN were said to be playing down the incident, saying it was the work of an isolated group. In Gorazde itself, neither the terms of the UN nor the NATO agreements were adhered to by the Serbs. On May 13, Serb forces agreed to withdraw from Gorazde in 24 hours, yet two weeks later 150 Serb forces in police uniforms still remained in the Gorazde exclusion zone. General Rose's response was to pressurize Bosnian President Izetbegovic to withdraw his army 3 km from the East bank of the Drina, after which the Serb 'police' would withdraw and the UN take control. According to the UNHCR, however, Bosnian Serb armed militia had not withdrawn from the 3 km total exclusion zone around Gorazde by the end of May, while areas of the confrontation line remained unstable and UNPROFOR troops, including UNMOs, periodically experienced security problems and obstructed movement.¹²⁷

The Serbs had gained a major military, political and diplomatic victory in Gorazde which was to have consequences extending well beyond that enclave.

The Contact Group

One of the outcomes of the Gorazde debacle was the formation of the so-called 'contact group' which, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd claimed, heralded a new era in international mediation on former Yugoslavia.

tanks were believed to be on the move within the Sarajevo exclusion zone in breach of the NATO ultimatum.

¹²⁶ Labour backbencher Chris Mullin brought up both these episodes in the House of Commons. The minister merely replied 'The hon. Gentleman points to two instances that we greatly regret' and assured Mullin that the situation had 'dramatically' improved since that time. Oral Answers, *Hansard*, Vol.245, June 21, 1994, c.115.

¹²⁷ *UN Information Notes*, June, 1994, iv.

A number of factors contributed to the establishment of the Contact Group. The peace forged between Bosniacs and Croats through US diplomacy in March 1994¹²⁸ had resulted in the ICFY being marginalized, since direct negotiations with the Americans were viewed by both parties as more beneficial. This, together with the acknowledged failure of all previous peace plans, and the persistent Serb shelling of the UN 'safe areas', led to a call for a more structured international approach to crisis management in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The peace plan produced by the Contact Group is examined, both with regard to the implications of the plan itself, and the Group's handling of its rejection by the Bosnian Serbs. It is concluded that, as with the ICFY and its predecessor, the Hague Conference, the Contact Group inhibited an effective international response to the war, not only in its appeasement of the Bosnian Serbs and the continued reliance on Serbian President Milosevic as the principle interlocutor in peace negotiations, but by its very existence as the accepted international diplomatic forum for addressing the crisis, thereby effectively blocking other, potentially more viable, approaches to ending the war.

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The formation of the Contact Group was the result of a compromise amongst the major world powers, in which Britain played a major part.¹²⁹ Britain's preference was for a merger of Russian and US diplomacy within the Owen/Stoltenberg-chaired Geneva Conference, but this met with US opposition, America having refused to work with David Owen within the framework of the ICFY.¹³⁰ Its advantage from the

¹²⁸ For a comparison of hostilities in Central Bosnia before and after the US-brokered Bosniac-Croat Federation, see UNHCR maps 7 and 8, showing conflict zones on February 1 and March 31, 1994, respectively, pp.354-5.

¹²⁹ For the Contact Group, see also BURG/SHOUP, *op.cit.* pp.298-307.

¹³⁰ OWEN, *op.cit.* p.277 & 312.

British viewpoint, however, was that it provided a platform which could rein in the Clinton administration's propensity for the use of air power, and resist US Congress pressure to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government forces, while at the same time offering Russia a more prominent role in the international decision-making process. According to one unnamed British source, 'it aims to concentrate on the nitty-gritty of an overall cease-fire and get to grips with the map. So far everyone has been doing their own thing. This is meant to pull things together'.¹³¹

The five members were, nonetheless, divided in their political interests and perception of the situation from the outset. The Russians, British and French insisted on the necessity for modifying the peace plan in favour of the Serbs and playing the Milosevic card, viewing the Serbian President as indispensable to the peace negotiations, while the US and Germany aimed at the progressive isolation of the Bosnian Serbs, and the political and military reinforcement of the Bosniacs and Croats.¹³²

A further difficulty arose within the European Union, as many EU countries, now excluded from participation in decision-making, objected. The Contact Group also tended to be regarded as a competitor to the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. Other European states, such as the Netherlands and Spain, both significant contributors to UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Greece and Italy with their specific regional interests, objected to being excluded when the Contact Group was formed, arguing that it contradicted the European Union Treaty. David Owen anticipated these difficulties, later commenting that only a *fait accompli* would win reluctant overall European acceptance of the Contact Group.¹³³

¹³¹ Quoted in *Guardian*, April 26, 1994.

¹³² For discussion of Contact Group, see STARK, Hans in COT, ed. op.cit. p.44.

¹³³ Owen records that a number of EU countries questioned the legitimacy of the representation at the Contact Group, including the Netherlands and Spain. According to Owen, "[t]he Contact

The group met on a relatively informal *ad hoc* basis in different capitals, with the host state chairing the sessions as *primus inter pares*. The first Group meeting was held in London on April 25, with representatives from the United States, France, Britain, Germany and Russia.¹³⁴ The following month in Geneva the Contact Group plan, emanating mainly from the ideas of the Europeans and Russians, was presented, based on the separation of Bosnia-Herzegovina into largely autonomous entities, with 51% of territory ceded to the Croat-Bosniac Federation, and 49% of territory to the Serbs.¹³⁵ In July, the parties were presented with the final map and a working paper sketching five elements for a future constitution: (1) the commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, (2) the existence of two entities, (3) the 51:49 formula for territorial division, open to further changes of territory on a consensual basis, (4) permission for the Bosnian Serbs to keep 'ethnically cleansed territory' and (5) the option to maintain close relations with Serbia and Croatia. On July 5, foreign ministers in Geneva agreed that if the Serbs failed to accept the Contact Group plan, the arms embargo would eventually be lifted. Although Clinton and Christopher stressed that this was a last resort, there was a considerable lobby supporting it within the United States from both Congress and Senate. The plan was presented on a 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis, with massive penalties for non-compliance. The Bosnian government and Croats immediately accepted the plan in its entirety, on the understanding that the arms embargo would be lifted if

Group would report in a fairly bland way to the EU from time to time." OWEN, *op.cit.* p.278. This is also discussed in GOW, James. *Triumph of the Lack of Will. International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*. Hurst, 1997, p. 261.

¹³⁴ Italy joined the Contact Group in 1996. For the principles and the structure of the meetings, see, *Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Yugoslavia*, Bertrand de Rossanet, Den Haag: Kluwer, 1996.

¹³⁵ For Contact Group plan, see map 4, p.352.

they accepted and the Serbs rejected the plan.¹³⁶ In the event, the Serbs, who still held over 70% of Bosnian territory, did reject the plan.¹³⁷

Deep divisions within the Contact Group then ensued as the United States leaned towards the Group's declared option in the case of rejection, namely, lifting the embargo, albeit with caution since Britain, France and Russia threatened to withdraw their UN contingents should the embargo be lifted, thereby placing considerable responsibility on America for what transpired thereafter.¹³⁸ In the event, the Contact Group did not impose any of the coercive measures previously announced against the Bosnian Serbs, reverting instead, as on previous occasions, to diplomacy. After weeks of failure to secure the Bosnian Serb signature to the Plan and continued divisions within the Contact Group, some of its members, following a meeting with Milosevic in Belgrade on September 21, floated a revised plan to permit the Bosnian Serbs to link up with neighbouring Serbia, a concession not, however, supported by the US Administration.¹³⁹ In early October, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe went further, calling on Europe, Russia and the US to 'confirm' the right of the Serbs to confederate with a

¹³⁶ Bosnian President Izetbegovic, in a speech to the Bosniac Congress on July 18, declared that the plan was 'unjust', but should be accepted, in the absence of international support for alternatives, for the sake of preserving the Bosnian state, which could be strengthened with peace. *Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina*, July 18, 1994.

¹³⁷ The confidence of the Bosnian Serb leaders was demonstrated by the manner in which they rejected the plan. 'Karadzic handed over a sealed pink envelope containing the response. In a typically theatrical performance, he claimed it was the sole copy, and indeed asked for a photocopy to keep himself'. OWEN, *op.cit.* p.286.

¹³⁸ See OWEN, *op.cit.* p.295. The Clinton administration was coming under considerable domestic pressure as the US Senate had voted for both unilateral and multilateral lifting of the arms embargo on May 12, followed by the House of Representatives the following month which voted for unilateral action. In reaction to the Senate vote, the Russian Duma called for sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro to be lifted. OWEN, *Ibid.* pp. 279 and 283.

¹³⁹ *Washington Post*, National Weekly Edition, October 31-November 6, 1994, p.16.

neighbouring state. State Department and White House officials insisted that there was no backing for such a plan, either publicly or privately.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the Contact Group plan reaffirmed international endorsement of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the right of the Serbs (but not the Bosniacs or Croats) to their own entity.

In October, UN sanctions were partially lifted from Serbia and Montenegro, mainly due to pressure from Britain, France and Russia, and the efforts of David Owen. Previously, US officials had stipulated that sanctions could only be lifted after a peace agreement was signed, and in force. Following the alleged sealing of the Bosnian/ Serbian borders, however, and Milosevic's verbal pledge to withhold assistance to the Bosnian Serbs, Washington agreed to a UN decision for the partial lifting of sanctions. David Owen assumed the task of securing an agreement on border monitoring. Since the Contact Group formation, Owen had a substantially diminished role in Bosnia,¹⁴¹ but towards the end of the summer, following talks with Milosevic, the idea of internationally monitoring the Serbian/Bosnian border re-emerged. Since neither the UN nor the ICRC were prepared to get involved, the ICFY took over the supervisory role, appealing mostly to Scandinavian NGOs to contribute monitors. The fact that these were few in number (135) and unarmed (on Milosevic's insistence), and that the operation was being run on a shoestring budget, rendered the mission, as one UN official put it, 'simplistic and impracticable'.¹⁴² Owen was fully aware of the shortcomings of the mission, noting, however, that 'splitting the Serbs was far more important than holding out for a totally sealed

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. US Administration officials did concede, however, that the Serbs could open up the issue of 'constitutional arrangements' once they accepted the peace plan.

¹⁴¹ 'We, as Co-Chairmen, participated only in the latter part of the [Contact Group] meeting, after the communiqué had been virtually finalized; this was on the insistence of the US, perhaps to underline that the ICFY was not a formal decision-maker, but we had been able to feed in our views through our representatives on the Contact Group. It was a rather frustrating procedure but we decided to grin and bear it'. OWEN, *Ibid.* p.279. See also *Ibid.* p.297.

¹⁴² For the UN Under-Secretary's view of the mission, see GOULDING, *op.cit.* p.327.

border - which was never going to happen'.¹⁴³ It provided a continuing role for Owen and the ICFY, and reinforced the illusion that progress was being made on the political/diplomatic front. It also placed Milosevic in a favourable international light, distancing Serbia in the eyes of external observers from the Bosnian Serb leadership. In October 1994, the co-chairs of the ICFY wrote to the UN Secretary-General that Serbia and Montenegro had cut off all non-humanitarian shipments to the Bosnian Serbs which, in turn, triggered a partial lifting of sanctions against those states.¹⁴⁴

A speech by Milosevic on September 7 in the Serbian nationalist stronghold of Vranje shortly before the international easing of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro referred to Serbia's future as a leading state in a Balkans federation.¹⁴⁵ Milosevic referred to the contribution by the Vranje citizens to the development of Yugoserbia *sic*, and urged support for the '50-50' agreement between Serbs and non Serbs in Bosnia, declaring that Serbia was the deciding factor for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even allowing for a degree of bombast, given his large supportive audience, the whole tenor of Milosevic's speech reflected confidence in his ability to secure sufficient international support for his purposes.

A paper written at this time by a British diplomat who had previously served in Belgrade stressed the 'urgent need for an agreed Western agenda for handling Serbia which will wean Milosevic and the Serbian people off their current path of confusion and instability towards one that is more democratic and acceptable'.¹⁴⁶ While the paper ostensibly

¹⁴³ OWEN, *op.cit.* p.298.

¹⁴⁴ BURG/SHOUP, *op.cit.* pp309-310.

¹⁴⁵ 'We are the largest and most important force in the Balkans'. Slobodan Milosevic, *RTS Serbia*, September 7, 1994.

¹⁴⁶ ROBINSON, Michael. *Managing Milosevic's Serbia*. Royal Institute of International Affairs, January 1995.

presented a pragmatic approach towards the reestablishment of peace, and had wide currency in international negotiating circles, it also implicitly acknowledged Milosevic as a key player in the peace negotiations, rather than as a *continuing* threat to peace in the region.¹⁴⁷

The Bihac crisis

This section examines the British role in frustrating NATO air strikes against VRS positions around Bihac, in response to a violation of UN Security Council resolutions by VRS forces, and the international crisis which ensued from the Serb offensive, as the United Nations and NATO fell into dispute over the 'dual key' arrangement.¹⁴⁸

Bihac was one of six declared 'safe areas' through UN Security Council Resolution 836 in June 1993. The enclave was patrolled by a French battalion until October 18, 1994, when it was replaced by Bangladeshi forces. The enclave had been under Serb siege for two and a half years and, from May 1994, had received minimal humanitarian aid, largely due to obstruction by the Krajina Serbs of the passage of UN convoys.¹⁴⁹

The crisis was triggered, in August 1994, by the launch of a successful offensive on the part of the Bosnian government Fifth Corps under the command of General Atif Dudakovic against the forces of renegade Muslim leader Fikret Abdic, driving them to withdraw to Serb-held territory in Croatia. On October 25, with the humanitarian crisis in

¹⁴⁷ For the British position on Milosevic at this time, see the Foreign Secretary's statement in Debate on the Address: Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Hansard*, Vol.250, November 17, 1994, c.134.

¹⁴⁸ UNSCR 770 included the delivery of humanitarian aid using 'all necessary means'; UNSCR 824 called for the 'withdrawal of all Bosnian Serb military or paramilitary units from the safe areas to a distance where they cease to constitute a menace to their security'.

¹⁴⁹ "Disaster looms for the 180,000 persons in the Bihac region, where UNHCR has only been able to meet 8% of the food aid target in the past six months." *UN Information Notes*, November and December, 1994.

Bihac now acute,¹⁵⁰ Dudakovic led a further offensive south of the river Una, overrunning a Serb barracks on the Grabez plateau, and taking some 200sqkm of territory, in an attempt to break through the Serb siege, and acquire Serb-held territory. This constituted the first major Bosnian Army victory (albeit short-lived) since the beginning of the war. The superior weaponry of the VRS, reportedly with the assistance of troops and supplies from Serbia itself,¹⁵¹ enabled Mladic's forces to retake the territory the following month and, in late November, the VRS had entered the 'safe area' itself. The crisis which ensued was, in terms of British/US, and UN/NATO, relations, the most serious to date.

In October 1994, the United States had announced a partial easing of the arms embargo in the Adriatic, which caused consternation within Europe, as reflected in the Foreign Secretary's speech on the opening of parliament the following month.

We must not allow the strains created by Bosnia to disrupt the transatlantic partnership...It remains true - as it has always been true - that the international community will not impose a solution by force. It follows that the fighting will stop when, and not before, the parties fighting are persuaded to stop... [the operation] must now adjust to the change in the American role announced last week. But it should remain effective...we should avoid giving the problem a political weight that it does not deserve...it has been made entirely clear that Admiral Smith will continue to conduct the NATO operation in exactly the same way as before...

An arms embargo applies to all parties in the former Yugoslavia...if member states, and particularly permanent members of the Security Council were to ignore or contravene those mandatory resolutions, others would quickly follow suit. The authority of the Security Council would unravel and our hope for a more orderly world would begin to

¹⁵⁰ According to UNHCR, "the denial of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war is being practiced more systematically today than at any time during the conflict. The continuing refusal of the Krajina Serb authorities to allow the passage of UNHCR food convoys into Bihac is a sad example of this'. *UN Information Notes*, December, 1994, update (i) & p.13.

¹⁵¹ According to a classified UN report, armed men were spotted crossing the border into Bosnia in vehicles with Belgrade licence plates. *The Times*, December 3, 1994, p.15 and *Independent*, December 2, 1994, p.10.

dissolve.¹⁵²

The Foreign Secretary's reference to the necessity to maintain the arms embargo, a warning to America, was consistent with British policy in Bosnia since the onset of hostilities. It was, however, inconsistent with Britain's overall approach to the sale of arms to what many regarded as unsavoury regimes. What was remarkable here was Mr Hurd's uncharacteristic contradiction in regard to the overall principles of self-defence within the same speech for, minutes later, he declared *a propos* a different issue:

We recognise, as the United Nations charter recognises, that countries have a right to self defence. If a country wishes to defend itself it needs good equipment. A great many British companies supply high-quality defence products. That is the chain of reasoning and it is hard to resist. We need to ensure that when those products are exported, they are sold responsibly...

We will not put unnecessary barriers in the way of British companies which responsibly earn revenue and sustain the jobs of the 400,000 people in this country who work in the defence industry, or the approximately 90,000 of those whose jobs depend upon defence sales overseas. We are highly competitive in this field. It comprises only 2.1 per cent of our total exports. But we are not prepared to dull the competitive edge of that part of our industry to satisfy people who are well-meaning but ill-informed...

As I have tried to show, our outlook on foreign policy is worldwide. That is because the interests that we promote and protect stretch across the world. We rely on exports to supply a quarter of our gross domestic product - more than twice as much proportionately as Japan or the United States...We are a European power with interests that reach far beyond Europe.¹⁵³

The Foreign Secretary's stress on the importance of arms sales to the British economy underlines the significance of the decision to suspend arms sales to Yugoslavia's successor states, where political interests

¹⁵² Douglas Hurd, Debate on the Address: Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Hansard*, November 17, 1994, op.cit. c.134-6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* c.144-5.

were clearly perceived to outweigh the loss of potential revenue.

Protecting those political interests included, as Hurd put it,

taking the world as we find it, identifying British assets and those things that we are strong at and setting them to work as effectively as we can, in the interests of the prosperity and security of our people.¹⁵⁴

Britain's insistence on maintaining a blanket arms embargo over all former Yugoslav states, regardless of the stark imbalance of weaponry on the ground¹⁵⁵ and, perhaps more significantly in *real politik* terms, a widening rift with its US ally on the issue, suggested a strong British interest in securing a Serb victory.

On Bosnia, the Foreign Secretary referred to the current situation as 'a setback', drawing a symmetry of aggression in narrow terms which partly accounted for the activities around Bihac, but did not reflect the overall status quo.¹⁵⁶ He drew an optimistic picture of the situation in Sarajevo, omitting to mention that, although '90% of aid convoys now get through [and] the people in Sarajevo have known days on end when there have been no shells and no sniper casualties',¹⁵⁷ the siege of the city had in fact never been lifted, and the relative calm which prevailed in Sarajevo was also due to the Pale regime's decision to concentrate its energies in other areas of Bosnia, such as Gorazde and Bihac. Hurd also referred to 'the new relationship that we are building with Russia...our British relationship with Russia exhibits a new breadth,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. c.145-6.

¹⁵⁵ In October 1994, according to one source, Bosnian Serb forces had significantly more tanks, APCs, heavy artillery and anti-aircraft missile launchers than the entire Bosnian, Bosnian Croat and Croatian armies combined. *Pecat*, Zagreb, October 25, 1994, quoted in *Bosnia Report*, Issue 7, November 1994.

¹⁵⁶ 'The Bosnian Government have attacked, Bosnian Serbs have counter-attacked, villages have changed hands and been destroyed'. Douglas Hurd, Ibid. c.134.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

openness and warmth...'¹⁵⁸ while stating that 'Russia's interests will [not] always coincide with ours'. He did not mention Chechnya in the latter respect, however, where a major assault was then underway, or Bosnia.

The situation in Bihac, from the NATO viewpoint, was further complicated by the fact that the Bosnian Serbs had recently acquired new medium and high-level air defence systems, backed by sophisticated target-acquisition radar equipment.¹⁵⁹ The missiles were believed to have been made in Russia, and supplied to the Bosnian Serb army via Serbia.¹⁶⁰ NATO was thereafter forced to deploy larger formations of aircraft, prompting NATO Commander Admiral Leighton-Smith to argue for strategic air strikes to destroy the entire Serb air defence system. The Serb forces took immediate advantage of the reduced NATO surveillance, by dropping napalm and cluster bombs on Cazin, near Bihac, with many fatalities. On November 21, NATO, with the consent of French UN Force Commander for former Yugoslavia, Lt. Gen. Bertrand de Lapresle, and the authorisation of UNSC resolution 958, launched an attack on Udbina airfield in Serb-held territory in Croatia, from where the bombing raid had emanated. The initiative had full international (including Russian) endorsement, although General Rose stipulated that NATO action be confined to Croatian space.¹⁶¹ On the same day, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind made a statement to the House of Commons. Rifkind did not condemn the use of napalm and cluster bombs.¹⁶² Instead, he presented the Serb offensive as a

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. c.136.

¹⁵⁹ ROSE, Ibid. p.200, and *The Times*, December 3, 1994, p.15. Until then, the Serb forces had only deployed SA7 low-level ground-to-air missiles.

¹⁶⁰ *The Times*, Ibid.

¹⁶¹ ROSE, op.cit. p.201. *The Times* editorial, and *Independent*, November 21, 1994. On the use of napalm and cluster bombs, see *The Times*, November 19, 1994, and statement by Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind. *Bosnia, Hansard*, Vol.250, November 21, 1994, c.341.

¹⁶² Concern at the use of napalm was raised by MPs, who enquired as to the source of the supply and the possible possession by Serbs of other 'unacceptable weaponry, such as chemical

'vigorous counter-attack' in response to 'recent attacks by Bosnian Muslim forces in capturing large areas of Bosnian Serb-held territory'.¹⁶³ The reference to 'Muslim' forces, as opposed to 'Bosnian government forces', misrepresented the ethnic makeup of the Bosnian army of which the deputy head was a Serb. Also, the omission to mention the main reason for the Bosnian army offensive, namely, an attempt to break the 30-month siege, and the six-month blockade of aid deliveries to the enclave, distorted the facts.¹⁶⁴ The Defence Secretary also exaggerated the effect of the NATO attack, claiming that the damage to the runway 'will have profound consequences for denying the use of the airfield in future to Krajina Serb aircraft'.¹⁶⁵ The general tenor of Mr Rifkind's speech was defensive, and twice during his statement he sought to shift responsibility for decision-making in regard to NATO air strikes entirely to the UN on the ground.¹⁶⁶

The NATO action over Udbina was widely acclaimed at the time as the first such operation in NATO's history; the Serbs, however, were forewarned and had removed most of their aircraft from the airfield.¹⁶⁷ More significantly, perhaps, the second Udbina runway, over 3.5 km long, was not targeted by the 80 NATO bombs used in the air raid. The flight control equipment was also left intact, with the result that the airfield was operational again within hours, and Serb forces, undeterred, resumed raids over Bihac.¹⁶⁸ NATO had wanted to neutralize the airfield

weapons'. The Defence Secretary admitted ignorance on both counts, merely commenting that 'we must constantly monitor the position'. *Bosnia*, Ibid, c,347

¹⁶³ Ibid. c.341.

¹⁶⁴ For this, see *UN Information Notes*, December 1994, i & ii.

¹⁶⁵ *Bosnia*, *Hansard*, Vol.250, op.cit. c.343.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. c.345 & 348.

¹⁶⁷ See the account of the Udbina raid by a member of the EC monitoring mission. O'SHEA, Brendan, *Crisis at Bihac*, Sutton Publishing, 1998 p.108-9.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

and associated facilities altogether, but UNPROFOR had insisted that the airstrip only should be struck, not the aircraft operating from it.¹⁶⁹

As Serb forces moved into Bihac itself, a number UN member states, including some Security Council members, favoured extensive air strikes throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁷⁰ General Rose rejected this, arguing that the conflict could best be resolved by negotiation, a position which received the full support of British ministers.¹⁷¹ On the same day, two British Sea Harrier jets on reconnaissance over Bihac were locked onto by Serb SA2 missiles, which the pilots, acting in self-defence, destroyed.¹⁷² With the authority of the overall UN Commander in former Yugoslavia, General De Lapresle, NATO launched two further attacks on Serb SAM missiles.¹⁷³ General Rose, however, was reportedly 'fuming' after the NATO raids.¹⁷⁴ In his memoirs, he noted that he had persuaded General Lapresle to call off further air strikes since they risked collapsing the entire UN mission.¹⁷⁵ Rose wrote to General De Lapresle at this time, outlining UNPROFOR's increasingly unviable situation, and that it could withdraw safely without the assistance of NATO combat troops on the ground.¹⁷⁶ Significantly, General Peter Inge, the British Chief of Defence Staff, who had obtained a copy of the letter, then

¹⁶⁹ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.36/159.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.36/160.

¹⁷¹ *The Times*, November 23, 1994. p.1, The Foreign and Defence Secretaries were quoted as opining that air power was no substitute for peace negotiations. *Borba*, November 23, 1994, p.3.

¹⁷² During that week, three British aircraft were targeted by SAM-2 missiles. *ITN Report*, November 25, 1994.

¹⁷³ Daily Sitrep HQ BH Forward Command Sarajevo, 23/11/94, quoted in O'SHEA, op.cit. p.111.

¹⁷⁴ *The Times*, November 24, 1994, p.1.

¹⁷⁵ ROSE, op.cit. p.203.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

phoned Rose to advise him to restrict its circulation.¹⁷⁷ The letter had exposed not only the extreme vulnerability of the UNPROFOR mission, but the fact that there was no safe exit strategy in place! Also, the British government, for political reasons, did not propose to withdraw their UN troops.

On November 23, Serb leaders in Pale, through their spokesman Jovan Zametica, a former British lecturer in security studies, threatened 'all out war' if NATO retaliated against their advance on Bihac.¹⁷⁸ General Rose, who liaised closely with Zametica and the Bosnian Serb authorities through Mike Stanley (also known as Milos Stankovic, a British army interpreter of Serb origin), informed Zametica that the UN had little manoeuvring space if Serb forces penetrated the enclave. Zametica, clearly attuned to Britain's position, retorted that Rose should use his influence to make London understand what was at stake.¹⁷⁹

As NATO continued targeting Serb missile systems from a high level, a clash between General Rose and US Admiral Leighton Smith ensued, Smith having informed Rose that NATO would respond to every Serb offensive with a greater use of force, also that NATO intended to clear all the Serb missile systems from Bosnia before responding to any further UN requests for close air support. De Lapresle declined to intervene to stop NATO, and even the Russian embassy in New York supported NATO air power to end the war.¹⁸⁰ Rose later commented that 'there seemed to be nothing I could do to prevent this escalation...It looked as though we

¹⁷⁷ Rose notes that General Inge 'sounded nervous over the telephone, but assured the UN Commander that he 'had the confidence of everyone back in London'. Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ 'Ako nas napadnete, to znaci opsti rat', *Borba*, November 24, 1994, p.3.

¹⁷⁹ *Borba*, November 24, 1994, p.3.

¹⁸⁰ ROSE, op.cit. p.204-5.

were on our own'.¹⁸¹ Since the United Nations was also divided on the issue, 'we' presumably referred to Britain.

The Serbs responded to the NATO action by closing all checkpoints to UN and civilian traffic, suspending flights to Sarajevo, and taking French, Canadian and Ukrainian soldiers hostage around the weapon collection sites in Sarajevo, as well as a British convoy *en route* to Gorazde.¹⁸²

At a NATO ambassadors' meeting on November 24, the NATO Secretary-General criticised Members for their reluctance in backing a US plan aimed at ending the siege of Bihac. In Sarajevo, meanwhile, the Bosnian government singled out Britain as the western power most responsible for opposing intervention to save the enclave. At a press briefing, General Rose played down the crisis, despite the fact that several hundred UN personnel were held hostage by the Serbs, listing instead a number of 'encouraging' signs.¹⁸³

A public argument between the UN and NATO ensued as General Rose, backed by the British government, pressed for NATO close air support while opposing the strategic air strikes which NATO, the United States and France, as well as many other UN member states, favoured.¹⁸⁴ The US also proposed an extended air exclusion zone around Bihac, backed by NATO air power,¹⁸⁵ which the French Foreign Ministry confirmed

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p.205. See also O'SHEA, *op.cit.* p.111-112.

¹⁸² ROSE, *op.cit.* p.205.

¹⁸³ *The Times*, November 26, 1994, p.13.

¹⁸⁴ After the entry of VRS forces into Bihac, both the United States and France pressed for tougher military action, whilst the UN Commander continued to recommend 'prudence'. See *The Independent*, November 24, 1994, p.1 & 14, and *Le Monde*, November 25, 1994, p.3. Rose noted in his memoirs, 'I was simply not prepared to allow an air campaign to be mounted by NATO'. ROSE, *op.cit.* p.209.

¹⁸⁵ *Le Monde*, November 26, 1994, p.3, *Independent*, November 24, 1994, p.14, and *New York Times*, November 25, 1994, p.A1.

France would support. The Pentagon's Director for Strategy, Plans and Policy, General Wesley Clark contacted Rose, informing him that 'the US administration regarded UNPROFOR as a hostage group', and that the dual key had effectively been taken out of Rose's hands. Meanwhile, Admiral Leighton-Smith warned Rose that the Alliance would no longer allow NATO planes to be attacked without responding.¹⁸⁶ Rose's tactic was not to reject the air strike option wholesale, but to insist that NATO act only in UN defence.¹⁸⁷ An FCO official backed this up, commenting that 'we're against making pronouncements that we can't fulfil. It may sound impressive, but when you're asked how you're actually going to do it then all you can do is mumble'.¹⁸⁸

The NATO aircraft returned after two hours to their base in Italy, without having located any targets. The credibility of both the UN and NATO was now at stake, as the Serbs pursued their assault on the UN 'safe area' where 1,200 poorly-armed UN Bangladeshi troops were at risk. Admiral Leighton-Smith announced that the alliance had offered to conduct strikes but that the UN, which had the final authority, was undecided.¹⁸⁹ Arguing the difficulties in locating the Serb air defence radar system, Rose declared that it was 'controlled from an HQ outside Bosnia and could not be attacked'.¹⁹⁰ It later emerged through US intelligence that the UN command had been engaged in neutralising NATO air strikes against the Serbs. The CIA's Pentagon branch, the DIA, had been engaged within Bosnia's war since its inception, and amongst its surveillance targets were top-secret communications between the UN

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p.210.

¹⁸⁷ Rose comments 'By couching my request in these terms I prevented [the NATO commander] from rejecting it outright on the grounds that NATO would accede only to requests for strategic air strikes'. Ibid. p.209.

¹⁸⁸ *Guardian*, November 24, 1994, p.14.

¹⁸⁹ *Guardian*, Ibid. p.1.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

military command in Sarajevo and the British special forces. The Americans had become increasingly exasperated by what they saw as the thwarting of a robust stand against the Serbs, stemming from the reluctance of the European Union, and Britain in particular.¹⁹¹ A communication line was established so that undercover SAS teams, assigned to the UN as forward air controllers, could identify Serb artillery positions and relay the co-ordinates to headquarters and NATO pilots. But General Rose's office sent a secret order to the SAS not to identify targets, thereby neutralising the air strike.¹⁹²

The breakdown in relations between NATO and General Rose was raised in the House of Commons some weeks later. Responding to Defence Minister Nicholas Soames' claim that General Rose 'displayed throughout a remarkable resolve and determination in steadfastly continuing UNPROFOR's mission in support of the international community's efforts to secure a peaceful solution to the war'.¹⁹³ Labour backbencher Calum Macdonald requested a statement on 'the apparent breakdown of relations between NATO and the general towards the end of his tour? NATO threatened to withhold details of flight plans from him, fearing that he would disclose them to the Serbians and thereby put the NATO aircrew at risk'. Soames, reiterating his support for General Rose, merely retorted 'I will not explain the background to any such events, because they did not happen'.¹⁹⁴

Following a public accusation by Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic, who alleged that General Rose was personally responsible for NATO's decision to call off strategic air strikes, as well as criticism from a

¹⁹¹ See VULLIAMY, Ed: 'How the CIA intercepted SAS Signals', for a fuller explanation of the procedure of neutralising NATO air strikes. *Guardian*, January 29, 1996.

¹⁹² Prior to publication of the article, the author attempted to contact General Rose, but he was unavailable for comment. *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Army, Hansard*, Vol.255, February 23, 1995, c.500.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

number of national leaders that UNPROFOR had failed to deter attacks on the safe area of Bihac, the UN Secretariat convened, on 28 November, a meeting of troop-contributing countries to raise the issue of whether they wished to have their forces participate in more robust enforcement action from the air.

The Secretariat explained that NATO was reluctant to conduct air attacks against the Bosnian Serbs without first suppressing Serb air defense assets in the area, and that the UNPROFOR commanders had been unable to agree to such a widespread use of air power, "which would be tantamount to going to war with the Serbs"... Seventeen Permanent Representatives then took the floor, nine of them, including three permanent members of the Security Council, in support of UNPROFOR's relatively restrictive interpretation of the mandate, while eight expressed their inability to understand why more robust action was not taken. No firm decision was taken.¹⁹⁵

At a press conference on November 28, Kofi Annan, then in charge of UN peacekeeping operations, stated:

The great powers do not want to take risks in Bosnia, and accuse the UN for their own lack of political will. The UN is judged on unrealistic criteria. If the international community wants to impose peace in Bosnia it must take the political decision to do so and give us 3-500,000 soldiers.¹⁹⁶

Annan estimated that if UN evacuation was to take place, it would require 165 days. According to diplomats, troop contributing countries were divided on the question of military engagement, with the Muslim countries and the Netherlands in favour, and Russia and most of Europe against.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.36/161 & 163.

¹⁹⁶ *Le Monde*, November 30, 1994, p.3. [Author's translation]

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* General Rose in his memoirs, however, claims he had Annan's support. 'He assured me that our refusal to be drawn into a war was the only rational approach...' ROSE, op.cit. p.207.

The French position during the Bihac crisis was somewhat complex, with a number of senior French politicians and military heads, including foreign minister Alain Juppe who had led the initiative for a NATO ultimatum against the Serbs in February, pressing for a similar initiative in Bihac. President Mitterand characteristically opposed any move which confronted the Serbs, however. At a meeting at the Hotel Matignon on Sunday November 27 between Juppe, Defence Minister Leotard, Chief of Staff Admiral Lanxade and Elysee Secretary General Hubert Vedrine, there was an attempt to redefine the French position.¹⁹⁸ Yet the following day the initiative was dropped, due to lack of support from the French president.¹⁹⁹

In the meantime, the impasse between NATO and the UN Command in Sarajevo over Bihac gradually led to a reassessment of policy options by the United States. On November 27, US Defense Secretary William Perry recognised the Serb military superiority on the ground.²⁰⁰ The following day, the United States, at a meeting of policymakers at the White House, decided to abandon NATO action in favour of a diplomatic solution through the Contact Group.²⁰¹ This was promptly supported by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who agreed that 'diplomacy, not a military solution, is the only option'. As Serb forces approached Bihac town centre, Perry conceded the Serbs had won the war and saw 'no prospect' of the Bosnian government winning back any of the territory held by Serbs.²⁰² NATO Secretary-General Willi Claes merely pointed out

¹⁹⁸ 'Les dirigeants francais divises sur la position a adopter', *Le Monde*, November 29, 1994, p.4.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Juppe confirmed Mitterand's lack of support for this initiative at the French enquiry on Srebrenica. See interview with Alain Juppe. *Rapport d'Information*, op.cit. January 24, 2001.

²⁰⁰ *Le Monde*, November 29, 1994, p.3.

²⁰¹ *The Times*, November 30, 1994, p.21.

²⁰² *Independent*, November 28, 1994, p.1.

that 'we are not in a leading position. It is not up to us to define policy or the strategy. It is for the UN'.²⁰³

British politicians and diplomats then acted to promote the view that a Bosnian Serb victory was inevitable, and that peace could only be achieved through accommodating Milosevic on the issue of sanctions, and offering the Bosnian Serbs confederation with Serbia. In this, they were assisted by Russia, and by the caution of high-ranking US politicians, especially Perry and Christopher, while President Clinton remained silent on the issue. Senator Dole was depicted as relatively isolated, and foolhardy.²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, the Contact Group plan was revived and, with some adjustments, presented again to the parties. On BBC Newsnight, Malcolm Rifkind, questioned on the failure of the UN and NATO to save Bihac, replied 'I think there is always a danger of rhetoric on these occasions, bring too grandiose to be justified by what is possible ... Those who voice strong and unqualified views should visit Bosnia'.²⁰⁵ UN Ambassador David Hannay commented that 'five years into the post-Cold War era, we've all learned... that it's the UN with all its warts or it's the law of the jungle'.²⁰⁶ Sections of the British media sought to place the blame on the United States for the international debacle. According to one commentator, 'America seems to be driven by a series of often repeated resentments after three years of war in former Yugoslavia, not reality. Americans are driving a wedge into NATO unity just at the point where unity may achieve results'.²⁰⁷ Newspaper

²⁰³ BBC News, November 29, 1994.

²⁰⁴ Dole publicly singled out Britain: 'The biggest stumbling block is the British. They are the ones who want to do absolutely nothing'. He also alleged that Akashi and Rose had 'helped the Serb aggressors'. 'Meet the Press', NBC. November 29, 1994.

²⁰⁵ *BBC Newsnight*, November 28, 1994. Mr Rifkind, however, had limited his Bosnian trips to the UN British HQ which was in an area where peace had been re-established by a US-brokered agreement!

²⁰⁶ 'Bosnia Mustn't Be U.N.'s Death Knell', *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1994.

²⁰⁷ Nick Gowing, *Channel 4 News*, November 25, 1994.

headlines, such as 'Plight of Muslims moves blunt Dole'²⁰⁸ suggested a misguided emotional response on the part of the US Senator who challenged British policy. And the BBC commented, 'after three missile attacks on British planes in less than a week, the NATO planned air-strike has been called off. NATO and UN planners fear excessive use of air strikes could push the Serbs into fulfilling their threat and declaring all-out war on the UN'.²⁰⁹ The BBC had thus portrayed NATO and UN withdrawal as a wise option, rather than an act of appeasement, reflecting policy failure.

On November 28, at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, Douglas Hurd reiterated that congressional hopes of forcing a military solution could only have been met

by the provision of a large army, including contributions from all the allies...Everyone knows that such an army was not forthcoming. It has always been foolish to suppose that from the outside one can achieve peace with justice in former Yugoslavia...It was a cruel illusion to think that peace could be achieved by air power. Air power cannot impose a solution and air power cannot save a town from infantry attack.²¹⁰

He reiterated the government view that the conflict would only end with a negotiated settlement similar to the one already being pursued. He added that it was 'reasonable to consider' how the peace plan could be amended to suit the Bosnian Serbs better.

On November 30, in evidence before the Foreign Affairs Committee, Douglas Hurd reiterated the British position that military intervention on the ground 'was never a solution', that it required 'a very big army...to include ground forces from all the main allies including the United States'; lifting the arms embargo would have been 'ring fencing a

²⁰⁸ *The Times*, November 29, 1994, p.12.

²⁰⁹ *BBC TV*, November 29, 1994.

²¹⁰ *Guardian*, November 29, 1994, p.1.

massacre'; the policy adopted, 'doing what we can...trying to bring the parties together in a negotiated settlement and applying pressures on those who are resistant to that' was, according to the Foreign Secretary, the right one. 'I do not hold to the pretence that we could have imposed a solution by force'.²¹¹ Mr Hurd's main defence for continuing what was increasingly regarded as a fundamentally flawed policy was the improvement of life in Sarajevo and Central Bosnia. He argued that the position of Senator Dole (whom he was to meet the same afternoon) differed from that of the British government and 'from the huge majority of the House of Commons'. Questioned on the possible withdrawal of troops, Hurd demurred, declaring that the imminent EU Council of Ministers' meeting at Essen was 'not the right place to decide this', and that the position of Gorazde, Srebrenica and Sarajevo would be threatened by such action. 'There could come a time when we conclude collectively that the honourable task for which the UN despatched these troops to Bosnia could no longer be fulfilled, the risk on balance outweighed the good being done. As I say, we are not at that point'.²¹²

As on earlier occasions in the war the Serbs, observing the international retreat, pressed their advantage. In the following weeks, a noticeable 'hardening of Serb behaviour toward UNPROFOR' which experienced amongst the worst weeks of its mission in Bosnia.²¹³ The Serbs also installed additional anti-aircraft missiles around Bihac and Sarajevo and continued to hold UN personnel hostage, and to obstruct aid convoys to the 'safe areas'.²¹⁴ The Bosnian Fifth Corps, meanwhile, barricaded itself

²¹¹ Foreign Affairs Select Committee, November 30, 1994, 10.

²¹² Ibid. 11.

²¹³ As one UN official commented, 'the Bosnian Serbs are...targeting UNPROFOR; detaining its personnel and denying others essential supplies. This is a deliberately designed, carefully calculated insult against the United Nations'. Thant Myint-U, quoted from *New York Times*, December 6, 1994, p.A3. in BURG/SHOUP, op.cit. p.159.

²¹⁴ *The Times*, November 30, 1994, p.21. In Bihac, in December 1994, a total of 318 MT of aid was delivered against a target of 1,936 MT. In the other enclaves, food deliveries were also well below target. VRS forces also took British UN troops hostage. See also ROSE, op.cit. pp.215-6.

behind makeshift roadblocks in Bihac.²¹⁵ According to UNHCR, 'in their advance from the south and west of Bihac, the combined Bosnian Serb and Krajina Serb forces have burned entire hamlets and villages forcing more than 8,000 people to flee their homes in panic'.²¹⁶

The Serbs had called NATO's bluff in Bihac, which essentially left international powers with three options. The first was to deploy strategic air strikes to destroy the new Serb anti-aircraft missile system, to effect the withdrawal of Serb forces from the enclave, and secure access for the delivery of humanitarian aid. This was the preferred NATO and US option, as well as that of the French foreign and defence ministers, and the French Chief of Staff. It was opposed by President Mitterand, Russia, the British government, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Yasushi Akashi, and the UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia, General Sir Michael Rose. The second option was UNPROFOR withdrawal from Bosnia. This was threatened by both British and French ministers who had secured a pledge of assistance from the United States.²¹⁷ Ostensibly, this seemed the most obvious course, given that the UN was in a hostage situation, and was largely unsuccessful in effecting aid delivery to the enclaves where it was most needed, and much was syphoned off to feed the armies. This option was not seriously considered by any of the international players, however since, with no fall-back policy, withdrawal would be lengthy, bloody, expensive, give rise to bad publicity, and constitute a clear admission of UN defeat. Equally crucial, it would mean a loss of international control over the area. The third option, favoured by Britain from the start, and

²¹⁵ *Guardian*, November 29, 1994, p.11. Reporting from the ground, BBC correspondent Martin Bell estimated that, as the VRS troops converged on Bihac, the balance of forces was 15,000 against 500 defending. On Serbian television, hundreds of Bosnian Muslim prisoners were shown, being forced by their captors to chant: 'To whom does Bosnia belong? It belongs to the Serbs, as much as Moscow belongs to the Russians'. *BBC TV*, December 2, 1994, and *RTS Serbia*, *Ibid*.

²¹⁶ *UN Information Notes*, December 1994.

²¹⁷ In early December, President Clinton offered to send 25,000 US troops to extract UNPROFOR from Bosnia. *Time*, No.51, December 19, 1994, p.32.

later adopted by the international community as a whole, was to concede a partial Serb victory in Bihac, while making further concessions to Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs through the Contact Group peace plan, to prevent the enclave from falling to the Serbs, since this would provoke a massive flood of refugees, further destabilising the region, as well as the entry of Croatia into the war. This strategy rested on the co-operation of Milosevic.

In December 1994, Douglas Hurd and Alain Juppe, representing the Contact Group, flew to Belgrade to meet Milosevic, where an uneasy truce was reached.²¹⁸ At the same time, the US Ambassador to Germany, Charles Redman who had negotiated an end to the Bosniac-Croat war in March, travelled to Pale, in a clear signal that international ostracism of the Bosnian Serb leadership was at an end.²¹⁹ Later that month, a 4-month ceasefire was brokered with the assistance of a former US president Jimmy Carter, brought into the negotiations by an associate of Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic.

Meanwhile, as five hundred UN personnel were still held hostage, strained relations between the UN and NATO persisted, along with some confusion as to whether NATO was still patrolling the no-fly-zone. UN spokesman, Wing Commander Tim Hewlett, stated in Sarajevo that NATO jets had stopped flying earlier in the week, because of the danger of NATO planes being shot down by Serb SAMs: 'We've agreed a cooling

²¹⁸ For a cynical view of this meeting from Belgrade, see JANJIC, Dragan: 'Karadzic's triumphant return to negotiations', AIM, Belgrade, December 8, 1994. Janjic takes particular note of the American change of stance, represented by US Contact Group representative Charles Thomas, who reportedly stated that the Bosnian Serbs 'need not sign anything for the time being'. Janjic observes that the change of attitude reflected in Thomas's statement shows that the united forces of Belgrade and the world did not manage to organize a sufficiently great pressure on [Karadzic] and his copatriots', and that the only one satisfied was Karadzic himself.

²¹⁹ As Mirko Pejanovic commented, however, 'The Contact Group plan...is now being modified in a way that would abrogate the sovereignty and integrity of a member state of the United Nations'. *The Tablet*, 'The Battle of Bosnia', December 3, 1994. Mirko Pejanovic, a Bosnian Serb, was a founding member of the Serb Civic Forum, and a supporter of the Bosnian government.

off period. NATO has stood down at our request'.²²⁰ This statement was promptly (and forcefully) refuted by a NATO spokesman in Naples, however, as well as by NATO Secretary General Willi Claes himself.²²¹ The UN Secretariat in New York and Zagreb were reportedly equally unaware of the alleged development. The confusion had originated with the UN Command in Sarajevo, suggesting NATO powerlessness in face of the Serbs. Televised across the world, the clash served neither organisation, but would have given succour to Serb leaders in Pale and Belgrade.

At the OSCE Conference in Budapest on December 5, Bosnian President Izetbegovic stated his view as to where the blame for international failure to break the siege of Bihac lay:

Paris and London have from the very start spoken out as patrons and defenders of the Serbs, blocked the Security Council and NATO, and thereby prevented every step that could have been taken to halt the Serb offensives and the war as a whole. This is not my assertion - it appears in a recent statement by the Society for Endangered Peoples from Goettingen.²²²

On December 7, on his return from Belgrade, the Foreign Secretary made a statement to the House of Commons, recapitulating the previous month's events in Bihac. At that time, several hundred UN personnel were still being held hostage by Serb forces, the offensive on Bihac continued, and the Serbs were obstructing aid convoys to the enclaves. Hurd stressed the British government even-handedness with regard to the UN: 'we must be clear about [the UN role]. It is not there to impose solutions on unwilling parties, it cannot fight on one side, and it does not defend one army's territories against the attacks of another'.²²³ In

²²⁰ Hewlett was the RAF officer commanding the NATO air cell in Sarajevo. ROSE, op.cit. p.234.

²²¹ *The Guardian*, December 3, 1994, p.1.

²²² IZETBEGOVIC, op.cit. p.193.

²²³ *Bosnia, Hansard*, Vol.251, December 7, 1994, c.312.

response to a Conservative MP's proposal that 'massive retaliatory action from the air' should be used to prevent the Serb forces encroaching further on the 'safe area', Mr Hurd stipulated the limits of NATO action, in other words, denying that NATO air power could be used as a deterrent in Bosnia:

My hon. Friend...exaggerates ...the possible role of air power...The idea...that one can use air power to alter the policy of a Government or to bring recalcitrant people to the conference table is misguided...only the UN can assess the impact on the ground of any particular action. That sometimes causes impatience among observers who especially favour stronger NATO action, but it is a reality which has to be accepted.²²⁴

The 'observers' the Foreign Secretary mentioned as favouring a stronger NATO role encompassed several members of the Security Council, including the United States, the non-aligned movement and the Islamic states. The general picture conveyed by Douglas Hurd to the House of Commons was of a retaliatory action on the part of the Serbs (rather than a fullscale offensive) which then extended to the 'safe area' and, in more general terms, of a civil war with the sides fairly evenly weighted. Hurd suggested that Britain deserved credit for the restoration of peace in Central Bosnia, without acknowledging the central US role in brokering the Bosniac-Croat agreement.²²⁵ He also misled the House by denying that the Contact Group had introduced new concessions to the Bosnian Serbs, and revised the plan to encourage Serb acceptance.²²⁶ 'I do not know what [Calum Macdonald] means by introducing new concessions to the Bosnian Serbs. We have not done that'.²²⁷ Minutes

²²⁴ Ibid. c.316.

²²⁵ '...in central Bosnia, where most of our troops are... the situation has improved considerably' Douglas Hurd. Ibid. c.314.

²²⁶ Ibid.c.318.

²²⁷ Ibid.

later, however, Hurd conceded that '[Milosevic] has had a bit of relief ...Belgrade airport is open and certain events which were prevented are now possible'.²²⁸

In view of the significant concessions to the Serbs conceded by the Contact Group in Belgrade the Foreign Secretary was anxious to reassure the House that the Western allies were united, and that the United States, like Britain, sought a negotiated solution: 'It does not believe in a military victory and that is why it belongs with us... Senator Dole has a different analysis of this situation from ourselves and from the huge majority of the House of Commons'.²²⁹ Summing up the alternatives, Mr Hurd outlined three possible courses of action, (a) to despatch a huge army to impose a solution, (2) to ring fence a massacre by lifting the arms embargo and withdrawing the UN, and (3) to seek a negotiated settlement backed by humanitarian aid.²³⁰ Presented in that manner, the third course appeared the only feasible one. These were not the only options, however. The *effective* use of NATO air power had been excluded and, by implication, eliminated as a feasible option.

Throughout the Bosnian war, the British government position had remained resolute in its resistance to NATO intervention, other than in a close air support role, to protect UN troops on the ground, but the dichotomy between the British and American positions on the question of air strikes only became fully apparent in the Bihac crisis. In Bihac, in November 1994, the 'dual key' arrangement was used by the UN Commander on the ground, Michael Rose, together with the SRSG, Yasushi Akashi, to prevent NATO from acting (i) to protect the civilian population in Bihac who were being targeted in a three-pronged attack, (ii) to protect the UN Bangladeshi troops, who had been deployed in

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid. See pp.56-7.

Bihac without the necessary equipment for self-defence and, (iii) to destroy the new Serb surface-to-air missile system, imported from Russia via Serbia, which was being used to target NATO aircraft overseeing the UN-imposed no-fly-zone.

The different roles of the UN and NATO were demonstrated to be incompatible in the Bihac impasse. The UN was deployed in a war zone in a peacekeeping role, by definition blocking any NATO action which did not accord with UNPROFOR and Serb-defined 'impartiality'. The UN role was interpreted by General Rose in its narrowest sense, since UNSCR 836 and other resolutions were carefully worded, and could have been interpreted to permit military action to protect the civilian population, not just the UN troops. But the Serbs had two major advantages which they were able to use to foil the 'dual key' arrangement, and expose the flimsiness of the NATO/UN alliance on Bosnia. One was the newly-acquired long-range SAM missile system which General Rose argued could not be successfully targeted since it was controlled externally. Yet this statement in itself exposed the anomalies of a peace process which relied on the co-operation of the Serbian president who had in all probability supplied the Bosnian Serbs with the equipment which forced NATO to abandon its tactical approach. Under considerable British and Russian pressure, and a powerful media campaign, NATO withdrew. The second advantage to the Serbs was the presence of UN ground troops, especially those deployed in the remote 'safe areas' where their every movement required Serb consent. This combination of factors forced the US into a decision between support for the Bosnian government, on the one hand, and the maintenance, and implicitly the survival, of the Atlantic Alliance, on the other.²³¹ In public, America chose the Alliance, also in the knowledge that, if the crisis grew more

²³¹ The World Press Review Opinion Index suggests that global editorial opinion had concluded with near unanimity that the UN and NATO peacekeeping efforts were such a total failure that the future of both international bodies was in danger. Editorials of 50 leading overseas dailies sampled between 1-15 December 1994. 46 of the 50 agreed that the UN-NATO mission was not just a failure but a debacle. *World Press Review*, February 1995.

acute, the US would anyway be involved in assisting a costly, and probably hazardous, UN withdrawal from Bosnia. Meanwhile, however, a new strategy for Bosnia was being developed, overseen by the US Ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, which also involved a Virginia-based military consultancy, which was retraining the Croatian army.²³²

The Federation forces were now rapidly becoming more professional, and liaising with the expanding Croatian army so that, by late November, Croatia was sufficiently confident to threaten to enter the war if Bihac fell to the Serbs. The strategic importance of Bihac to Croatia, the potential refugee situation, and question of Croatia's reintegration, had prompted the Croatian government to put its army on general alert.²³³ The VRS forces, in comparison, were now severely over-stretched, having to man an extensive front line, while contending with a shortage of manpower. The British-led move to neutralise NATO in Bihac had, therefore, proved a significant boost to the Bosnian Serb mission.

²³² An MPRI executive, Ed Soyster, who was also a former DIA director, oversaw a contract with Croatia which began in November 1994 with Croatian Defence Minister, Gojko Susak, writing to the US deputy defence secretary John Deutch, asking for direct US aid to the Croatian army. Mr Deutch replied that the arms embargo prevented direct involvement, but it could be organised through a private consultancy. Consequently, US intelligence organised air drops of weapons and military equipment to the Bosnian army, including radar equipment and anti-tank missiles. *Guardian*, op.cit. January 26, 1996. (The *Guardian* claimed it had sight of correspondence containing this information).

²³³ *Le Monde*, November 29, 1994, p.3.

Conclusion

In 1994, the UN 'safe areas' policy was challenged by the Bosnian Serbs in three areas. On each occasion, NATO held back from decisive intervention. In this, as UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in the context of the 'dual key' arrangement, Lt. General Sir Michael Rose played a major role.

During his mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Rose did not confine his energies to soldiering, but also assumed the role of political emissary/negotiator in his endeavours to influence policy at crucial junctures in the war. This placed him at odds with the Bosnian government, much of the international media and the US establishment. On the other hand, Rose had the clear support of the British Prime Minister, as well as the Foreign Secretary and the Ministry of Defence. Despite later acknowledging that genocide did not form part of official Bosnian government policy 'in the way that it so clearly did with the Serbs', there were many occasions where Rose managed to convey the impression that it was the Bosnian Muslims who were chiefly responsible for the war, and for blocking peace initiatives, while managing to ignore the fact that they, and not the Serbs, had signed up to both the Vance/Owen and Contact Group plans.

Three major events were to test the acumen of the British general: the Sarajevo market massacre and the two Serb offensives on the UN 'safe' areas of Gorazde and Bihac. The negotiated settlement following the Markale tragedy was heralded by General Rose, as well as by the British government, as a major breakthrough, and a 'window of opportunity' for peace throughout Bosnia, claiming credit for the fact that the UN was able now to travel freely across central Bosnia. Yet the new freedom of movement was due almost entirely to the US-brokered Washington Agreement between Bosnian Muslims and Croats which laid the foundations for a truce. Meanwhile, in Sarajevo the siege continued and

within weeks the heavy weapons were again under the control of the Pale regime.

Two months later, during a major Serb assault on the Gorazde enclave, a further NATO ultimatum was issued and Rose applied the same tactic. The UN-brokered agreement, with a different deadline from that of NATO for the withdrawal of Serb heavy weapons, both weakened the earlier NATO ultimatum, and forged a serious rift between the two institutions. General Rose's initiative to introduce UN troops into the area *before* the NATO ultimatum expired, moreover, rendered the ultimatum virtually meaningless, exposing NATO's impotence under the 'dual key' arrangement. Few countries were willing to render their troops potential hostages to the Serb forces. Indeed, as the Duke of Wellington's Regiment entered the enclave, the French battalion was turned back on instructions from Paris, on grounds of danger to French troops. During the Serb attack on Gorazde, 700 people were killed, and nearly 2,000 injured. Rose denied, however, that there were extensive civilian casualties. The harmony between the position of General Rose in Sarajevo and British ministers in London was evident, not least in their mutual, and remarkable, lack of response to the VRS liquidation of a British officer, and the shooting down of a British Sea Harrier Jet.²³⁴

The third episode, the Serb attack on the Bihac enclave was, in international terms, the most serious. The Serbs had recently acquired medium and high-level air defence systems, which they began deploying into the town in early November. This new danger to NATO planes led to a US demand for air strikes to destroy the whole Serb air defence system. Rose successfully resisted this and, as a result, it was decided that NATO aircraft fly in larger formations, but with reduced coverage. The Serbs were quick to take advantage, launching a major attack on the town of Cazin with many civilian casualties. Again, Rose's blame

²³⁴ Ibid. p.154.

was mainly reserved for the Bosnian Muslims for attacking out of the area, and provoking the Serbs into counter attack.

General Rose regarded his mission as a success. He had succeeded in staving off major NATO air strikes while the new sophisticated Serb air defence system remained intact, and he had deterred significant punitive action against the Serbs, even when British troops and aircraft came under Serb fire. What the British UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina also did, however was, by default, to encourage the Serb leaders to believe that they could continue with impunity to pursue practices diametrically opposed to the principles which governed the organisation General Rose was meant to be representing, namely, the United Nations.

Meanwhile, on the political front, the establishment of a new initiative in the form of a 'Contact Group', necessitated by the US refusal to continue working with Lord Owen through the ICFY, conveyed the impression that the negotiating process was still effective, whilst also bringing the Russians politically into the international decision-making process. Owen, meanwhile, found a new niche in setting up a border monitoring mission which, in the event, served as little more than a veneer in demonstrating the much-publicised, but not clean, break between the Bosnian Serb leadership and Milosevic, while Serbia continued as paymaster for the VRS commanders.

In estimating the success of the Bosnian Serb mission during 1994, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the UN Commander for Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Sir Michael Rose, in his term in office, was a crucial player. Acting through United Nations channels and in conjunction with the SRSY Yasushi Akashi, and with the assistance of ICFY co-chairs, David Owen and Thorwald Stoltenberg, Rose was able to limit NATO's response to major Serb violations of UN Security Council resolutions in three declared 'safe areas' in Bosnia. This was effected with the endorsement of British government ministers and, in at least

one instance, in liaison with the Ministry of Defence. On the other hand, it damaged relations between the United Nations and NATO, and between Britain and the United States, and contributed to the American decision to focus on strengthening the Bosnian government and Croat forces on the ground, while apparently acquiescing in the British-led policy. This led to the gradual reversal of military power on the ground and to the strategic NATO air strikes which combined to bring a halt to the aggression the following year.

CHAPTER 5

1995: THE BRITISH POSITION UNDER CHALLENGE

Introduction

A number of new factors in early 1995 coalesced to present a challenge to some of the precepts on which international policy in former Yugoslavia had hitherto been based. These included the partial unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the United States, the arrival of a new British UN commander in Bosnia, Croatia's reluctance to renew the UN mandate, and a change in the French presidency. The relaxing of the arms embargo on the Adriatic enabled larger quantities of arms to reach Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the (uneasy) alliance between Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian government facilitated the cooperation necessary to retake some of the territory captured by VRS forces three or more years previously.

These factors are assessed, with emphasis on divergences which emerged between British government policy in London and UNPROFOR policy in Sarajevo, under the new British commander, Lt. General Sir Rupert Smith, and the implications for Britain of a more militant French policy under President Jacques Chirac. The response of the British government to the fall of the UN 'safe area' of Srebrenica is also assessed, including the London Conference, and the circumstances which led to NATO action in Bosnia in late August 1995, effectively ending the war in Bosnia.

Reference is made to parliamentary documentation, the UN Srebrenica Report, the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation report on Srebrenica, the French National Assembly enquiry into Srebrenica, ICTY

evidence, relevant publications, including personal memoirs, and local and international media coverage.

The four-month cessation of hostilities agreement brokered by a former US president, Jimmy Carter, commenced on January 1 and prevailed, with some infringements, till the beginning of May, when Croatia launched a two-day offensive, retaking the UNPA zone in Western Slavonia.¹

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman had informed the UN Secretary-General on January 13 that his government did not wish the UNPROFOR mandate in Croatia to be renewed beyond March 31, 1995.² A modified UN mandate was subsequently agreed on, establishing the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO). Ratified through UN Resolution 981, it called for implementation of the major provisions of the Vance Plan.³

During the same week, ostensibly in anticipation of an emergency UN withdrawal, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind announced a further UK contribution to the UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia, to include 3 RAF Chinook helicopters with a further 3 on standby, 12 British Army helicopters for air reconnaissance and transport, plus 19 extra UN Military Officers to supplement the 18 already in theatre. By May 1995,

¹ For ceasefire violations up to this time, see *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.38-39/177-184.

² Britain alleged that this put at risk the search for a regional peace settlement. *Written Answers, Hansard*, Vol.252, January 20, 1995, c.742. Foreign Minister Hogg had already discussed the issue with Deputy Croatian Foreign Minister Ivo Sanader on January 11. A subsequent UN Security Council statement, issued on January 17, with the support of Britain, urged Croatia to reconsider. *Written Answers, Hansard*, Vol.253, January 24, 1995, c.137-8. The UN track record in the Croatian UNPA zones had been generally poor and, at times, even counterproductive. In one instance, the Ukrainian battalion in Glina, in the lead-up to the Bihac crisis, sold \$500,000 of fuel to the Serbs. According to Western military intelligence sources, 'every time a key is turned at UNHQ in Zagreb, Bosnian Serb intelligence knows about it'. *Observer*, July 16, p.14.

³ *UN Information Notes*, April 1995.

only four of the helicopters had been delivered.⁴ By July 1995, however, Britain had become the largest UNPROFOR contributor to Bosnia, with 8,000 troops on the ground, guaranteeing a leading role in the rules of engagement and other increasingly contentious issues.⁵

House of Commons, May 9, 1995

The UNPROFOR mission had been one of the lynchpins cementing British policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, providing a legitimate pretext for resisting both military intervention and the removal of the arms embargo and, for the most part, freezing the status quo on the ground. Yet, a number of factors combined in early May to challenge the basis on which the mission had been established. The Croatian action in Western Slavonia demonstrated the new strength and resolve of the Croatian army (HV), and the ineffectiveness of UNPROFOR, and threatened the UN survival in the rest of Croatia. Moreover, the new UN Commander, Lt. General Rupert Smith, indicated his readiness to respond to the mounting VRS offensive in Bosnia. The Bosnian and Croat armies were meanwhile acquiring more weaponry, and cooperating on the ground.

Shortly after the HV offensive on Western Slavonia, the British government called a full debate on former Yugoslavia to reaffirm the validity of the UNPROFOR mission and mandate.⁶ Although British ministers had, from time to time, intimated that the UN troops might in certain circumstances be withdrawn, those warnings were directed

⁴ Written Answers, January 20, 1995, op.cit. c.749. David Clark, Former Yugoslavia, *Hansard*, Vol.259, May 9, 1995, c.643.

⁵ Statement of Defence Estimates 1996. Chapter 2, No.2. HMSO, 1996.

⁶ If UNPROFOR were forced to leave Croatia, which provided its headquarters, its mission in Bosnia would be unsustainable. See *International Herald Tribune*, Opinion. November 15, 1994. Article by Adam Roberts, John Chipman, Philip H. Gordon and Mats Berdal.

mainly at the Serb leadership in whose interest it was that the UN remain,⁷ as well as towards the United States, to preempt any further US unilateral action on the arms embargo. The Bosnian government had long regarded UNPROFOR as a mixed blessing, not least since it was often not able to fulfill its basic mandate, namely, to assist in the safe delivery of humanitarian aid.⁸ Indeed, Bosnian leaders had on various occasions expressed the view that, if UNPROFOR was unable to protect the civilian population it should leave, and the arms embargo be removed. On the other hand, withdrawal was not a simple matter. In late December 1994, President Clinton had offered US assistance, including up to 25,000 ground troops, for an eventual UNPROFOR withdrawal which, according to US Defense Secretary William Perry, would require several weeks to organise and months to effect, and could involve many casualties.⁹ It would also represent an ignominious defeat for the UN and the contributing nations and, in the absence of NATO intervention, leave the area vulnerable to extremists from all quarters, risking a wider regional war.

In the House of Commons debate on former Yugoslavia on May 9, the Foreign Secretary sought support for the continuation of the UNPROFOR mission, arguing that withdrawal could exacerbate the crisis, and lead to an escalation of the war. The four-month ceasefire had broken down in Bosnia-Herzegovina and, more ominously, Croatia where it required only

⁷ According to the UN civil affairs head, Phillip Corwin, this was the view of the Bosnian Serb Vice President, Nikola Koljevic. See CORWIN, Phillip, *Dubious Mandate: A Memoir of the UN in Bosnia, Summer 1995*. Duke University Press, 1999, p.184.

⁸ Despite government ministers' promotion of Britain's role in aid distribution, both through the Overseas Development Agency and UNPROFOR, the previous month's UNHCR records indicated that the only areas to receive their full allocation of aid were Serb-held, and unobstructed by siege. In March 1995, of eight regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina recorded by UNHCR as receiving aid, only in Banja Luka was the monthly food target reached. Bihac, having endured three years' siege, received just a quarter of its food target. *UN Information Notes*, April 1995, p.12.

⁹ Perry estimated an emergency withdrawal could be effected much sooner, but this would imply an ignominious withdrawal, leaving equipment behind. William Perry, *CNN News*, July 12, 1995.

two days for the Croatian army (HV) to take control of the UNPA zone in Western Slavonia and expel the Krajina Serb forces. These, in turn, retaliated with rocket attacks on Zagreb and further expulsions of non-Serbs in Banja Luka, reportedly to 'make room' for displaced Serbs.¹⁰ In Bosnia, shelling had resumed in Sarajevo, Bihac and Tuzla, violating the UN resolutions on 'safe areas' and the air exclusion zone.

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd began by defining the purpose of the debate.

We are not yet at the point at which, in our judgment, it is right to abandon the [UNPROFOR mission]...I should like to explain to the House the balance of our judgment and we shall listen carefully to what the House says about that balance.¹¹

This approach, in focusing on the bare issue of whether UNPROFOR should stay or leave, by implication marginalised other options. Also, as in previous debates, government ministers made a number of misleading observations. Douglas Hurd, for instance, asserted that government policy on Bosnia was representative of public and parliamentary opinion, in occupying the middle ground between 'two sets of criticism of our policy: that we should be doing a good deal more than we are, or that we should be doing a good deal less'.¹² This was somewhat ambiguous, since a considerable number of those who advocated 'doing less' also recommended that UN withdrawal be accompanied by the removal of the arms embargo.¹³ In other words, the 'two sets of criticism' were not entirely polarised but had some common ground, since each

¹⁰ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.39/183.

¹¹ Douglas Hurd, *Former Yugoslavia*, *Hansard*, May 9, 1995, *Hansard*, Vol.259, c.583. Hurd's diary entry two days after the Commons debate, however, records his misgivings on the survival of the UNPROFOR mission: 'The whole concept of UNPROFOR, for long fragile in the absence of agreement, was breaking down'. HURD, 2003, op.cit. p.473.

¹² *Ibid.* c.583.

¹³ The Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Conservative MP David Howell, was amongst these.

would result, unwittingly or otherwise, in shifting the balance of power in favour of the Bosnian government.

On the issue of military intervention in Bosnia, the Foreign Secretary once again employed the familiar refrain that 'we were not willing - not Britain, not Europe and certainly not the United States - to impose a settlement from outside by force',¹⁴ suggesting that this was tantamount to 'an international system based on the imperial principle of the international community imposing from outside a particular solution and form of government - as we did with the slave trade...'¹⁵ The comparison with the slave trade rendered the proposal of a form of international protectorate in Bosnia both archaic and abhorrent. Also, the Foreign Secretary's claim that there was a lack of international will was not quite accurate, since the United States had proposed the use of force for the purpose of facilitating (rather than 'imposing') a settlement as had, at different stages of the war, various European leaders. Hurd also suggested an equivalence of culpability between the parties, characterising all the people of former Yugoslavia as wanton: 'We could not start to build something new from the ruins of Yugoslavia while its peoples continued to tear down the building and fight over the rubble'.¹⁶

The lift-and-strike policy was described by the Foreign Secretary as a 'halfway' measure, destined to failure, and unsupported by the military:

There has been a second, more common delusion: that somehow we should have gone in halfway. We might, say, help one side with our aircraft and bombs while they fight it out on the ground. I know of no Government whose military experts think that the use of air power could swing the balance of advantage in the mountains of Bosnia.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid. c.583.

¹⁵ Ibid. c.589.

¹⁶ Douglas Hurd, Ibid.

¹⁷ Douglas Hurd, Ibid.

The statement was carefully worded. A considerable number of military experts had supported the use of air power in Bosnia but, since there was no unanimity on this point within governments, the comment may have been technically correct.¹⁸ Also, the reference to the 'mountains of Bosnia', as opposed to simply 'Bosnia', suggested a sense of recklessness in the use of air power.¹⁹

Challenged on conditions in the 'safe areas', Douglas Hurd sidestepped the issue of the more controversial eastern enclaves, and focused on Sarajevo as a relative success.²⁰ He also stated that 'the Royal Welch Fusiliers are helping to protect the people in the isolated enclave of Gorazde', which was hardly the case. Conditions in Gorazde at that point were such that the troops had difficulty protecting themselves.²¹ The Foreign Secretary also referred to Milosevic's 'earlier part in the crisis' and 'the rupture between the Bosnian Serbs and Belgrade',²² which implied that the Serbia was no longer involved in the war, when VRS officers continued to receive both salaries and supplies from Belgrade. He also insinuated misleadingly that the economic agreement and ceasefire brokered in Croatia in 1994 was 'largely the work of Lord Owen, who has played an indispensable and - I must say - usually

¹⁸ See the Foreign Secretary's statement the previous week: 'We cannot have NATO intervening from the air on some sort of report which is not validated by the British general on the ground, when it is the safety of the UN forces which the whole exercise is designed to promote. That is the case for the dual key'. Douglas Hurd, *Bosnia, Hansard*, Vol.259, May 3, 1995, c.336. See also the House of Commons debate of July 26, 1993, for discussion of military expert advice on the issue of air power in Bosnia.

¹⁹ A novelist in his spare time, Douglas Hurd perhaps chose his words with more care than some of his colleagues.

²⁰ 'Sarajevo has changed substantially'. Douglas Hurd, *Former Yugoslavia*, op.cit. c.584. This was notwithstanding the Serb mortar which had killed eleven people in Sarajevo the previous day. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.40/185.

²¹ Douglas Hurd, *Former Yugoslavia*, May 9, 1995, op.cit. c.586. See intervention by Labour MP Frank Cook whose son served in Gorazde, for conditions under which British troops served. *Bosnia*, July 12, 1995. *Hansard*, Vol.263, c.959.

²² *Former Yugoslavia*, op.cit. c.586.

thankless part in the progress that has been made',²³ and declared that 'In Bosnia, we have suggested a loose union of the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serb regions'.²⁴ This was an early indication of the British role in an arrangement for Bosnia-Herzegovina - namely a 'loose union' - which was to jeopardise its longer-term viability as an independent state.²⁵

Robin Cook, the new Labour spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, stressed the loss of UN authority in not upholding resolutions and carrying out threats issued, but on the issue of military intervention went no further than to urge 'the use of limited airpower in response to local violations',²⁶ thus broadly reflecting the position held by the late Labour leader, John Smith. Cook did, however, attack 'cartographic diplomacy', an approach based on 'drawing lines on a map'²⁷ which, he claimed, risked legitimising gains achieved through military conquest, making his speech the most comprehensive and penetrating of any Labour frontbencher since the war began. The contribution by Labour Defence spokesperson David Clark would have sent a more reassuring message to Serb lobbyists, however:

Opposition Members have tried to support the Government's policy in Bosnia. At times we have been ahead of them, but we believe that, by and large, they have followed the correct line...Hon. Members have described the policy as containment...I do not think that that is bad.²⁸

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. c.588.

²⁵ The 'loose union' formed the basis for the Dayton Agreement which continues, at the time of writing, to threaten the longer-term viability of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state. See analysis of Dayton by LOVRENOVIC, Ivan. *Dani*, October 10, 2003.

²⁶ Robin Cook, Ibid. c.591.

²⁷ Ibid. c.595.

²⁸ David Clark, Ibid. c.641-2.

Labour critics of government policy were, as previously, from the back benches, and carried little weight. Their case was put most explicitly by Malcolm Wicks, who pinpointed British government responsibility in the continuing Serb aggression:

I believe that the British Government in particular, have placed the break on the use of air strikes. At different times when the United States Government clearly wished to take a firmer approach to the conflict in Bosnia and to stand up to the aggression by the Serbian regime of Dr Karadzic, British Ministers said no, and urged caution...

The history books will show that the west's overall response has been poor, but the role of the British Government will stand to be especially condemned...every time Ministers from the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have stood up in the House to comment on the situation, when the speeches have been analysed they have served as a green light for further Serbian aggression."²⁹

The Defence Secretary, closing the debate, did not refer to the allegations raised by Wicks, instead falling back on the 'civil war' argument: 'There are no foreign armies in Bosnia, and Bosnia has not been invaded by another state... 95% of those doing the fighting in Bosnia are Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims'³⁰ citing, as other MPs on earlier occasions, Fitzroy Maclean's memoirs as evidence of the internecine hatred between the Bosnian communities.³¹ Rifkind also conveyed an unequivocal message with regard to international intentions in Bosnia:

I freely acknowledge...that one of the great factors in this issue is the tendency of international organisations and politicians of all persuasions and from all parts of the world to declare that certain things are unacceptable and that certain matters will not be tolerated when it is clear that none of the Governments concerned, nor the

²⁹ Malcolm Wicks, *Ibid.* c.636-7.

³⁰ Malcolm Rifkind, *Ibid.* c.646.

³¹ *Ibid.*

international community as a whole, intends doing the minimum necessary to give credence to those threats. I accept that there must be a link between the language we use and the action that we are prepared to take.³²

This was an important statement. Firstly, Malcolm Rifkind was sending a clear signal on behalf of the international community that aggression in Bosnia would be met with virtual impunity. This suggested that the Defence Secretary felt empowered to speak for the international community concerning Bosnian policy. It was also (presumably unwittingly) a declaration of abnegation on the part of Britain of its responsibility as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to act to restore peace where international security was at threat.³³ He closed the debate by echoing the Foreign Secretary's statement in endorsement of the UNPROFOR operation:

The conclusion of the Government - and I suspect of the whole House - at this moment is that the United Nations presence in Bosnia continues to be justified.³⁴

This was little more than clutching at straws, however. The UNPROFOR mission was no longer sustainable within its declared mandate. Moreover, the desired outcome from the point of view of the British government (and of Milosevic), namely, a peace agreement signed by the Bosnian Serbs, in which they were allocated approximately half the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with provision for linkage with Serbia, looked increasingly unlikely. The Bosnian Serbs were neither willing to sign the peace plan, nor able to achieve an outright victory. The so-called 'twin pillars' of British policy - the UNPROFOR operation and the

³² Ibid. c.647.

³³ The legal advice contradicted the Foreign Secretary's position: '...there clearly is [in Bosnia], without any doubt, a violation of international peace and security so one is already within the parameters of permissible intervention. It is simply a question of political judgment as to whether one wishes to'. Professor Rosalyn Higgins, QC, Foreign Affairs Select Committee, February 17, 1993, No.390.

³⁴ Ibid. c.650.

peace process - were both in ruins, as Hurd himself was later to acknowledge.³⁵

The government contention, that the UNPROFOR presence was in some way a deterrent to Serb forces, and that the Serb leadership wanted it to leave was later refuted by General Smith who stated that, on the contrary,

They...needed to keep the UN, because the UN was something of a protection against them being bombed by NATO...I then deduced from that that...they would squeeze and bring pressure on the eastern enclaves ...while keeping the UN in there so that...there was a hostage, as it were, to protect them from NATO bombing.³⁶

Another military expert pointed out that

Not only do the Serbs get relief aid, but if UNPROFOR shields the Bosnians, it provides at the same time a fixing force for the BSA against certain Bosnian-held areas, allowing the BSA to deploy its own stretched forces elsewhere, as well as acting as a human-shield guarantee against foreign air strikes.³⁷

The usefulness of UNPROFOR to the Serbs was also later confirmed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

Nor was it sufficiently appreciated that a systematic and ruthless campaign such as the one conducted by the Serbs would view a United Nations humanitarian operation, not as an obstacle, but as an instrument of its aims.³⁸

³⁵ Just two days after the Commons debate, Douglas Hurd noted in his diary: 'Bosnia as usual unsettled. MOD/UNSG [Ministry of Defence/UN Secretary-General] block air power. PM blocks withdrawal, so we don't have much of a policy except Pauline [Neville-Jones] toiling away in contact group'. HURD, 2003, op.cit. p.473. The note may have been a retrospective attempt on the part of Hurd to distance himself from the policy, however, since there had been no indication at the time of any significant policy divergences within the Cabinet on Bosnia.

³⁶ General Rupert Smith, Milosevic Trial, *ICTY*, October 9, 2003, p.27301-2.

³⁷ CIGAR, *The Right to Defence*. op.cit. p.34.

³⁸ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.95/493.

Bosnia-Herzegovina. January/June 1995

During the first half of 1995, significant restructuring and reinforcement took place within the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ARBiH). While the ARBiH had long enjoyed an advantage in manpower, the VRS advantages in heavy weaponry, logistics and communications, as well as command and control, were far superior until early 1995, when the balance slowly began to be redressed.

Table 2

Estimated Order of Battle

	VRS	ARBiH	HVO	Serbia/ Montenegro
Tanks	400	50	40	950
APCs	400	30	25	1000
Artillery	1600	450	260	6800
Fixed-wing combat aircraft	50	0	4	615
Personnel (000s)	80	120 (50 full-time)	40	140 (400 reserves)

SOURCES: Vladimir Jovanovic, "Umrijeti za koridor" (To die for the corridor), *Monitor*, Podgorica, Montenegro, May 13, 1994, p.8; Emil Vidusic, "Nece Pale na Beograd" (Pale will not attack Belgrade), *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, Split, Croatia, August 15, 1944, p.15; Milan Vego, "The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 1993, p.65; Fran Visnar, "Srbi gube bitku za bitkom" (The Serbs are losing battle after battle), *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, November 4, 1994, p.21; General Ivan Gorinsek, *Pecat*, Zagreb, October 25, 1994; Interview with Brigadier General Jovan Divjak by Darko Vukov Colic, *Globus*, Zagreb, January 20, 1995, pp.44-45.³⁹

The Bosnian government had announced on a number of occasions that Sarajevo would not undergo another winter of siege and, in mid June, the ARBiH began a series of attacks to break out of Sarajevo, in order to

³⁹ Quoted from CIGAR, 'The Right to Defence', op.cit. p.13.

connect the capital with government-held territory in the north. Initial gains were quickly lost, however, as VRS forces retaliated, and prevented almost all movement in and out of Sarajevo.⁴⁰ Throughout May, the pressure on UNPROFOR either to withdraw or to change its mandate mounted. On May 10, Bosnian President Izetbegovic wrote to UN Security Council President Jean Bernard Merimee, with a message 'to all countries who have threatened withdrawal, we say simply "we will not impede you"'.⁴¹ Izetbegovic requested that the UNPROFOR role in Bosnia-Herzegovina be reviewed by the Security Council. Days later, the commander of the Bosnian army, Rasim Delic, declared that, in the absence of a peace accord, the Bosnian army would liberate Bosnia.⁴²

In the east Bosnian enclaves, however, the new developments within the Bosnian army were barely felt. On January 18, Dutchbat-3 took over from Dutchbat-2 and, in the process, VRS forces encroached into the enclave and established new positions. Pleas by the Bosnian government to UNPROFOR to re-establish the *status quo ante*, met with no success.⁴³ In early February 1995, VRS forces began to further restrict international convoy access to the eastern enclaves, particularly Srebrenica. Access was also restricted for UNPROFOR supplies to the enclaves resulting in a degradation of UNPROFOR military capability, and a worsening in living conditions for the local population.⁴⁴ General Smith's proposal, that the enclaves be supplied by helicopter, with the assistance of NATO air power if VRS forces attempted interception, was referred by the UN Force Commander in Zagreb, General Janvier, to the

⁴⁰ In response to this, General Smith activated a plan to bring aid to the Bosnian capital without Serb consent. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p44/210-212.

⁴¹ *Le Monde*, May 12, 1995, p.3.

⁴² *Ibid.* May 19, 1995, p.5.

⁴³ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.38/178.

⁴⁴ 'The situation in the eastern enclaves, where only 17% of the overall monthly aid delivery target was met in June [1995], is ...very serious'. *UN Information Notes*, July 1995.

Member States whose troops or air assets would be required to conduct the operation, but met with an unfavourable response.⁴⁵ On March 7 General Mladic, meeting at Vlasenica with General Smith, indicated that he might take action against the eastern enclaves.⁴⁶ Smith's response was that such action would 'almost certainly lead to international military intervention against the Serbs'.⁴⁷ Mladic was reportedly dismissive.⁴⁸

On May 12, at a meeting with the UN Secretary-General, the differences between the UN leaders on the ground were manifest, as General Janvier in Zagreb, backed by SRSG Yasushi Akashi, proposed to withdraw UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves, as well as ceasing the monitoring of Heavy Weapons Collection Points (WCPs) in the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) around Sarajevo, established in February 1994. This proposal was opposed by several UN Security Council Members on the grounds that the withdrawal of UNPROFOR would expose the enclaves to greater danger.⁴⁹

On May 22, VRS forces removed several heavy weapons from the WCPs, followed by a similar withdrawal by Bosnian government forces. Two days later, General Smith issued a warning to both sides either to withdraw all heavy weapons from the TEZ, or to replace them in the WCPs. When the Serbs failed to comply, the SRSG authorized NATO air strikes on two ammunition bunkers near the Serb headquarters at Pale. When VRS forces continued attacking Sarajevo and the other 'safe areas', however, including Tuzla, where 71 civilians were killed, and over

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.40/184.

⁴⁶ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.39/180. Mladic assured the UN Commander, however, that the safety of civilians in the enclave would be guaranteed.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ This was not surprising. The international retreat in Bihac the previous November had presumably set a precedent in the VRS commander's perception.

⁴⁹ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.40/187.

200 injured,⁵⁰ NATO targeted Serb bunkers a second time. In retaliation, several hundred UN personnel were taken hostage by the Serbs, with a number used as human shields to deter further attacks. At this point the SRSG instructed General Smith that 'the execution of the mandate was to be secondary to the security of UN personnel'.⁵¹ When, however, VRS forces disguised in French uniforms and using French UN equipment overran an UNPROFOR checkpoint controlling the strategic Vrbanja bridge in central Sarajevo, French UNPROFOR troops counterattacked on direct instructions from the Elysee, with the approval of General Smith, killing two Serb soldiers and arresting four others.⁵² The new French president, Jacques Chirac responded with an ultimatum to the UN Secretary General, that either the UNPROFOR mandate should be changed and reinforcements brought in, both to protect the UN forces and to enable them to 'play their role', or the French UN force would withdraw.⁵³ Chirac had already launched an initiative to make UNPROFOR less of an obstacle to a more 'energetic' approach to ending the siege of Sarajevo,⁵⁴ a significant departure from the Franco-British understanding on UN troop deployment prevailing through Mitterand's presidency. General Smith, meanwhile, ordered the consolidation of UNPROFOR positions in defensible locations, which implicitly meant withdrawal from the eastern enclaves a proposal which,

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.40/188-9.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.41/193-4. This was confirmed in an UNPROFOR directive on May 29. See Brigade-General O. van der Wind, Rapport gebaseerd op de Debriefing Srebrenica (Report based on the Srebrenica Debriefing), p.16, quoted in HONIG, Jan Willem and BOTH, Norbert, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*. Penguin, 1996, pp.8 & 27. Janvier's instruction to Smith deprived the latter of the right to request NATO air strikes, the decision having been referred to the UN Secretary-General in person. HARTMANN, op.cit. p.333.

⁵² According to former French Defence Minister, Charles Millon, this was authorised by Chirac personally, bypassing the UN central chain of command. See *Rapport D'Information*, op.cit. Millon interview, April 26, 2001.

⁵³ *Le Monde*, May 28-29, 1995, p.3.

⁵⁴ Ibid. May 17, 1995, p.2.

according to the Foreign Secretary, emanated from Britain.⁵⁵ While General Smith may have held a different position from the British government and the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb on how to address the Serb aggression, he did not have the authority, beyond a certain point, to exercise his preferred options.⁵⁶

The following day, the UN Secretary-General presented a major report to the Security Council, addressing the broad themes of 'the mandate, the attitudes of the parties and the security and safety of UNPROFOR'.⁵⁷ In the report, the UNSG raised the issue of the nature of the UNPROFOR mission:

Nothing is more dangerous for a peacekeeping operation than to ask it to use force when its existing composition, armament, logistic support and deployment deny it the capacity to do so...Peacekeeping and the use of force (other than in self-defence) should be seen as alternative techniques and not as adjacent points on a continuum, permitting easy transition from one to the other.⁵⁸

This exposed the anomaly of the UNPROFOR mandate. In the first place, the UNPROFOR mission was not, strictly speaking, a peacekeeping operation since, in much of Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was no peace to keep.⁵⁹ Secondly, according to the terms of UN Security

⁵⁵ 'It was appropriate to propose to our friends and allies some concentration of UN forces within Bosnia'. Malcolm Rifkind, *Bosnia*, May 31, 1995, *Hansard*, Vol.260, c.1100. For General Janvier's position, see also HARTMANN, op.cit. p.332-3.

⁵⁶ In the French enquiry, it was pointed out that most of the interlocutors informed the enquiry that the military found themselves in two circuits, or chains of command, that of the UN and their own national chain of command. In the case of General Smith, this would have imposed a dual restriction, the UN in Zagreb and the British government largely sharing the same position. *Rapport d'Information* op.cit. Interview with General Jean Cot, February 8, 2001. See also General Cot's description of how a Scandinavian government overruled General Briquemont's order to the Nordic battalion to send a detachment to Srebrenica. Ibid.

⁵⁷ S/1995/444, para.3, quoted in *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.42/201-8.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.42/202.

⁵⁹ This was strenuously refuted by Malcolm Rifkind, who insisted that peace prevailed in much of Bosnia. *Bosnia*, May 31, 1995, op.cit. c.1100. French UN Commander Gobilliard, responsible for 5,000 UN troops in the Sarajevo area, on the other hand, called for a new tougher

Council Resolution 836, UNPROFOR was permitted to use force, if required, to fulfill its mandate, namely, to escort UN humanitarian aid.⁶⁰ The UNSG had not, on the other hand, expressed opposition to peace enforcement *per se*, but merely where UNPROFOR had not the necessary 'armament, logistic support and deployment' required to lend credibility to a threat of force.⁶¹ The UN Secretary-General concluded that, until a political solution was achieved, the way forward was 'to define a regime acceptable to both parties'⁶² which was tantamount to appeasement of the Bosnian Serb regime. Divided on how to respond to the report, the Security Council made no response.

House of Commons. May 31, 1995

The Prime Minister, John Major, recalled parliament in order to set out the government's response to what he termed a 'tense and dangerous situation'. With the captivity of Royal Welch Fusiliers in Gorazde, the situation had qualitatively changed. Both the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary, although expressing qualified support for General Smith's decisions up to that point, made it clear during their respective speeches that the British government was of the same mind as UN Force Commander General Janvier and SRSB Yasushi Akashi, in rejecting

UNPROFOR mandate. "We have reached the limitations of our current mandate". *Le Monde*, June 1, 1995, p.2.

⁶⁰ Paragraph 9 of UNSCR 836, however, defined the parameters for the use of force as being 'in self defence', a view apparently at variance with earlier directives to UNPROFOR from the Secretariat that air power could also be used in response to shelling of 'safe areas', and to neutralize attempts to obstruct UN freedom of movement. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.27/111 and p.43/204.

⁶¹ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.43/203. The UN troop shortage dated back to June 1993 when the UK Permanent Representative led a Security Council decision to the effect that only 5,000 extra UN troops were required to protect the 'safe areas', although the UN Secretariat had recommended 32,000 troops. See *Srebrenica Report*, Ibid. p.24/94.

⁶² Ibid. p.43/208.

further NATO action.⁶³ The government response to the changed circumstances was to reinforce the British UNPROFOR personnel on the ground. John Major stressed, however, that 'that does not mean that we are taking sides in the conflict. The protection force remains neutral, and it remains impartial'.⁶⁴

The first several minutes of the Prime Minister's statement were spent recapping the 'humanitarian' and 'strategic' reasons for despatching British troops to the region in the first place. In describing the situation in Bosnia in 1992, John Major managed to paint a picture of a vicious civil war in which all sides were equally responsible for 'cold-blooded and racial-based [sic] murders'.⁶⁵ Apart from the inaccuracy of Major's portrayal of the early days of the war, the circuitous approach to expanding on the capture of British troops acted to deflect from the Serb action. Major also equalised between the Serbs and Bosnian government in referring (incorrectly) to UN soldiers being 'deliberately targeted and killed by both sides', and linking the Serb hostage-taking to the Bosnian army's 'capture' of Ukranian troops.⁶⁶ He also stated that the Serb hostage-taking had been part of a 'chain reaction of attack and counter-attack by Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb forces. 'Both parties have violated the Sarajevo exclusion zone'.⁶⁷ This interpretation of the

⁶³ The Prime Minister stipulated that General Smith, *if* taking action required 'in justifiable self-defence' would have the 'unqualified backing of the British Government'. *Bosnia, Hansard*, Vol.260, May 31, 1995. Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind opined that the events of that week proved the limitations of air power when combined with UN ground forces without either the mandate or equipment to wage war, suggesting that UN commanders, including General Smith, agreed with that position. c.1095-6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* c.1003.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* c.999.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* c.999. Rifkind was presumably referring to the incident in January 1995 where the Bosnian government lost control of part of the enclave to Serb forces during the handover to the new Dutch battalion in January 1995. The Bosniacs urged UNPROFOR to reestablish the *status quo ante*, which they were unable to do. In return the Bosnian commanders restricted UNPROFOR access to the area. When UNPROFOR troops entered the area despite the Bosniac warning, 100 of them were taken hostage for four days. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.38-39/178.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* c.1000.

events of that week exposed the different positions of the British government and the British commander in Sarajevo who had seen fit to call for air strikes against the Serbs only.

The Labour leader, Tony Blair, offered full support for government policy:

From the beginning, we have ruled out a role as combatants, taking sides to fight the war. I believe that that is right.... simply in military terms, if we compare it with Kuwait, the war there was relatively easy to fight on what was effectively a sand table in the desert. Here, the terrain is unremittingly hostile to outside involvement... It is natural guerilla territory. The fighting forces needed would be vast.⁶⁸

Blair also eschewed calls to lift the arms embargo on Bosnian government forces.⁶⁹ Misguidedly, he described as 'a central weakness until now' the failure to disarm the 'safe areas',⁷⁰ and referred to the impact on Bosnia of 'the early recognition of Croatia'.

Two backbench MPs were better informed. John Home Robertson, who had visited Bosnia several times on parliamentary and humanitarian duties, informed the House that UNPROFOR was cooperating with the Bosnian Serb army to enforce the siege of Sarajevo, with the UN manoeuvred into a position where it merely applied decisions made by the VRS liaison officer over who and what entered or left Sarajevo.⁷¹ The UN also channelled aid convoys into Sarajevo through Serb-controlled checkpoints, with the VRS routinely stealing up to 50% of the loads, and were not able to return fire when the VRS targeted, with machine guns

⁶⁸ Tony Blair, *Ibid.* c.1010.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* c.1009.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* c.1011.

⁷¹ An example was given where 40 pallets of material urgently required by *Medicins sans Frontieres* were impounded by the UN on Serb instructions at Sarajevo airport for 3 months.

and mortars, vehicles with official UNHCR number plates.⁷²

Conservative MP Patrick Cormack referred to the Serb Civic Council which gave unequivocal support to the concept of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, repudiating the use of force of Karadzic and his followers. The Council claimed the support of 200,000 Serbs in Bosnia.⁷³

Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind declined to comment on this information. Outlining the role of the new force, he was anxious to reassure the House of Commons (and others listening)⁷⁴ that

becoming a combatant is not and will not be our policy...the events of the last week...should have shown all but the most stubborn the limitations of air power when combined with United Nations ground forces who do not have either the mandate or the equipment with which to wage war.⁷⁵

Yet Britain had taken a leading role in the Security Council in establishing the UN mandate and rules of engagement. This comment, and the later lament of John Major, that 'too often - through lack of troops - the UN was obliged not to act in horrific circumstances it either could not see, had to ignore, was miles away from or was powerless to stop',⁷⁶ were, therefore, somewhat disingenuous.

Expanding on the purpose of the reinforcements, Rifkind explained that

they provide essential capabilities to enhance the protection of UNPROFOR and increase the range of options open to UN commanders to respond robustly against the possibility of

⁷² John Home Robertson, *Ibid.* c.1028-9.

⁷³ Patrick Cormack, *Ibid.* c.1045. Cormack stated that this figure had not been convincingly challenged.

⁷⁴ At least one close associate of the Bosnian Serb leadership, Srdja Trifkovic, was present in the Visitors' Gallery during the debate. [This author also attended that debate.]

⁷⁵ Malcolm Rifkind, *Bosnia*, May 31, 1995, *op.cit.* c.1095.

⁷⁶ MAJOR, *op.cit.* p.549.

UN troops having to defend themselves when trying to carry out UNPROFOR's mission in a more hostile environment.⁷⁷

...the 5,000-strong force comprising 24 Air Mobile...will be there primarily to protect United Kingdom forces. Consistent with that, however, we are willing to see it available for the protection of UNPROFOR as a whole...its members will wear blue berets and blue helmets.⁷⁸

This represented a fundamentally different approach to the RRF from that of France whose forces were equipped with combat gear and dark-painted vehicles making up, with a small Dutch contribution, the total proposed reinforcements. This was perhaps the first tangible evidence of divisions which were to intensify between Britain and France on their Bosnian policy, both leading up to, and in response to, the fall of Srebrenica.⁷⁹

Malcolm Rifkind also confirmed the British lead in proposing to withdraw UN troops from the eastern enclaves, without any concomitant measures to ensure their safety:

it was appropriate to propose to our friends and allies some concentration of UN forces within Bosnia...We certainly believe that it is appropriate to examine [the] three safe havens [Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica] to see whether the policy is tenable and to assess the implications of a possible change of policy.⁸⁰

Although the Defence Secretary emphasized no decision had been reached on this, the implication that UN forces might withdraw from those areas, without any alternative provision for their safety, would

⁷⁷ *Bosnia*, op.cit. c.1097.

⁷⁸ Ibid. c.1098. The Defence and Foreign Secretaries wrote a joint memo to the Prime Minister, stressing that 'we must not raise too high expectations about the effect of our reinforcements, that our troops would still need some degree of local consent if they were to do their job'. HURD, 2003, op.cit. p.474.

⁷⁹ The British RRF troops were still using white-painted vehicles after the fall of Srebrenica. *The Times*. Editorial, July 27, 1995.

⁸⁰ *Bosnia*, op.cit. c.1100-01.

have sent a clear message to General Mladic who had already informed General Smith of his probable intention to take military action against the eastern enclaves.⁸¹

The Rapid Reaction Force

In the wake of the hostage crisis, the British and French governments announced the intention of contributing to an international theatre reserve force to enable UNPROFOR to protect its troops more effectively. Meeting in Paris on June 3, European and NATO defence ministers agreed that the force would consist of two heavily armed brigades, drawn principally from France and Britain, with a contribution from the Netherlands.

Soon afterwards, a dispute arose as to the purpose of the new force. ICFY co-chair Thorwald Stoltenberg, SRSG Yasushi Akashi and General Bernard Janvier all insisted, as did the British government, that the force should operate under peacekeeping rules of engagement, a view also shared by the UN Secretariat.⁸² Akashi even objected to the name 'Rapid Reaction Force' (RRF), preferring instead the term 'theatre reserve' (the term also used by Malcolm Rifkind in the House of Commons) as being less confrontational. The UN Commander, Lt. General Rupert Smith, on the other hand, took a similar view to the French, namely, that the RRF should be used to implement the UNPROFOR mandate and open corridors to Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves.⁸³ In the absence of political backing for that, he preferred no reinforcements at all.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.39/180. The intentions of General Mladic in this regard were familiar to many on the ground at the time. See, for instance, the interview with General Nicolai, April 19, 2001. *Rapport d'Information*, op.cit.

⁸² *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.44/214.

⁸³ The Director of Strategic Affairs at the French Ministry of Defence, Jean-Claude Mallet, later recounted that, with his British counterpart, David Omand, he went to the UN New York headquarters on June 7, to present the RRF concept approved by NATO and EU defence

There are serious problems of command and control with the RRF. Where are its orders coming from? UNPF headquarters in Zagreb? London? Paris? NATO headquarters in Brussels? Where is it going to be stationed?⁸⁵

The extent of friction at international level was evident when a letter from Akashi to Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on June 19, assuring Karadzic that the 'theatre reserve forces' would operate under existing UN peacekeeping rules of engagement, was denounced by US Ambassador Madeleine Albright, who issued a statement that 'the method, timing and substance of this letter are highly inappropriate'.⁸⁶ On July 6, as the VRS forces began the final onslaught on Srebrenica, the UN Secretariat reiterated that the RRF would not be used for peace enforcement, but solely 'to assist UNPROFOR forces to carry out their peacekeeping mandate. The Force will not have any function outside of this role'.⁸⁷

On June 21, Malcolm Rifkind condemned the US Congress for blocking funding of the Rapid Reaction Force, arguing that there was an 'ethical obligation as well as a practical need' for the force.⁸⁸ Majority Republican leader in the Senate, Robert Dole challenged the 'ethical obligation'

ministers, confirming that the 'RRF must be in national uniform with different rules of engagement from those prevailing under the UN'. *Rapport d'information*, op.cit. Mallet interview, April 5, 2002.

⁸⁴ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.44-5/215-7. General Smith maintained that UNPROFOR would have to be prepared to fight or always be 'stared down by the Serbs'.

⁸⁵ General Rupert Smith, quoted in CORWIN, op.cit. p.122. Diary entry, June 25, 1995. Corwin noted that Smith was 'clearly frustrated by what he sees as the disarray in political capitals about the mission of the RRF...Smith wants to use the RRF principally against the BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] and sees himself blocked by bureaucrats distant to the daily struggle of life in Sarajevo'. Ibid. p.123.

⁸⁶ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.45/219.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p.45/220,

⁸⁸ 'It would be quite wrong and quite improper to allow the difficulties in one particular country to so distort the international effort to save lives...' Malcolm Rifkind, quoted in *The Times*, June 22, 1995, p.13.

however, insisting that further funds for operations in Bosnia would not be approved unless it could be assured that the UN would carry out its mandate to deliver aid and protect the designated 'safe areas'.⁸⁹

Time was running out for the Pale regime. Smith estimated that the Serbs now needed to shore up their defensive positions, and would therefore fight to conclude the war that year, which would require the eastern enclaves to be neutralised.⁹⁰ Smith sought clear guidance for the use of air power from the UN Secretariat in New York, but this was not forthcoming since it would allegedly infringe on the role of the Security Council. The Council, in turn, was unprepared to elaborate on resolutions which were often ambiguous and drawn up after much compromise amongst Council members. Besides, ambiguity, especially in relation to the 'safe areas' had, on occasion, proved useful.

In early July, the French Armed Forces Chief, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, announced that the multinational brigade (forming part of the RRF) would be ready to open a supply road to Sarajevo on July 15. *The Times* Defence Correspondent, Michael Evans was amongst those who sought to discredit the French initiative. Evans pointed out that UN commanders in Sarajevo had 'more realistic expectations' and that, 'according to UN military sources, Lt. General Rupert Smith...[was] expecting to be asked to use the new force with considerable constraint'. He also noted that 'Yasushi Akashi.. [was] reluctant to sanction any use of force that might inflame the situation in Bosnia'.⁹¹ He emphasized that the UN draft 'concept paper' concerning the RRF focused mainly on protection for UN troops and facilitating the freedom of movement, with

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See Rupert Smith, Milosevic trial, *ICTY*, October 9, 2003, pp.27301-2. Bosnian Serb Deputy Nikola Koljevic also expressed the wish that UPROFOR stay in Bosnia to the UN Civil Affairs Chief. See CORWIN, op.cit. p.184.

⁹¹ *The Times*, July 6, 1995, p.11.

no mention of peace enforcement.⁹² The size of the British contribution to the RRF had now been reduced, with 1,000 troops from the brigade to remain in Britain on 7 days' notice, and the remaining 4,000 from the 24 Airmobile Brigade would not be ready to operate before the end of August.⁹³ This, added to the earlier declared intention to withdraw UN troops deployed in the eastern enclaves, sent a clear signal that, at least on the part of Britain, the new RRF would present little threat to Serb forces.

The fall of Srebrenica

With mounting international tensions, and a rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and EU envoy David Owen, both resigned.⁹⁴ Just six days before the fall of Srebrenica, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was officially appointed to replace Douglas Hurd as foreign secretary, on the latter's firm recommendation.⁹⁵ David Owen was replaced by the former Swedish premier, Carl Bildt, also on the recommendation of the British government, who briefed Bildt before his appointment.⁹⁶ Bildt's own view of his British sponsors is instructive:

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ The number of Chinook and Puma helicopters destined for Bosnia was to be cut from 18 to 6, and the Gazelles and Lynxes reduced by half, from 72 to 36, with all helicopters painted white. Ibid.

⁹⁴ Owen had intimated for some months that he had intended to resign as, on occasion, had Hurd. The precise timing of their resignations, however, just weeks before the Srebrenica crisis, with Britain's Bosnian policy on the verge of collapse, was fortuitous. For one view of the Foreign Secretary's resignation, see HODGE, C. 'Slimy Limeys'. *The New Republic*, August 6, 1995.

⁹⁵ See HURD, 2003. op.cit. p.513.

⁹⁶ 'I reviewed the situation at Chevening on 5 June with Carl Bildt, the former Swedish Prime Minister, who was about to be appointed at our suggestion to succeed David Owen as the EU representative in Bosnia'. HURD, 2003, op.cit. p.474. For Douglas Hurd's personal approach to Bildt on the issue of Owen's replacement, see BILD, Carl. *Misija mir*. Zid, Sarajevo, 1998, p.30. See also Bildt's briefing in Chevening, See BILD, C. *Peace Journey*. Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1997, p.15.

John Major was by now the most experienced of the leaders of the Contact Group on this particular issue. When he took the lead in sending soldiers to Bosnia to protect the humanitarian aid deliveries, thus starting the most extensive United Nations military operation even, Bill Clinton was a little known Governor of Arkansas and Jacques Chirac a certainly better known Mayor of Paris.⁹⁷

Bildt, together with Thorwald Stoltenberg, visited Milosevic in Belgrade on July 1, and again on July 7, in an attempt to secure an agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, including mutual recognition. These sessions, held in the prelude to the final Srebrenica assault, of which Milosevic was almost certainly aware and probably colluded in,⁹⁸ lasted nine and ten hours, respectively, with Milosevic hosting the EU and UN envoys over lavish meals. The second session was also attended by General Mladic, commander of the Serb assault on Srebrenica days later.⁹⁹ Bildt's account of these encounters indicates the Serbian leader's confidence, and his control over the situation, and possibly the naivete of the new EU envoy.¹⁰⁰ Srebrenica was apparently not mentioned during either visit. Despite the unproductive outcome of those meetings, the Bildt mission was offered by some European powers as reason for withholding NATO air power.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ BILDT, 1997, op.cit. p.23.

⁹⁸ See evidence by Budimir Babovic at the Milosevic trial, where a document showing members of Serbia's police (MUP) operating outside Sarajevo being transferred to Srebrenica under the command of Bosnian Serb police colonel Ljubomir Borovcanin. *IWPR Tribunal Update*, No.317, June 17, 2003. Also, there were VJ officers at the VRS headquarters at Han Pijesak. The Dutch Military Intelligence Service concluded some months later that the decision to attack Srebrenica was coordinated with Serbian General Perisic and President Milosevic. *NIOD*, op.cit. Part III, Chapter 7, No.7. There was also evidence at the time of Serbian T84 tanks being used in the Srebrenica assault. *Guardian*, July 15, 1995, p.1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* pp.41-54.

¹⁰⁰ Bildt seemed bemused over their encounter and (not surprisingly, as it later transpired) unsure of what had been achieved. 'The mystery of Milosevic remained'. *Ibid.* p.52.

¹⁰¹ CORWIN, op.cit. p.193, and *Rapport d'information*, op.cit. Interview with General Nicolai, April 19, 2001.

On the eve of the fall of Srebrenica, UN Civil Affairs Chief Phillip Corwin estimated that

The situation in Srebrenica has deteriorated drastically...As the reports about Srebrenica filter in, it is clear that our intelligence has been faulty, our defensive capacities are inadequate, and our resolve is divided. We expected an action with limited objectives; we were dead wrong. Three hundred lightly armed peacekeepers facing approximately five thousand Serb soldiers, fifty artillery pieces, and fifteen tanks. A credible defense is inconceivable without air strikes.¹⁰²

By July 1995, Dutchbat had only 16% of its operational ammunition requirement, and much of this, after 18 months deployment, was in need of repair, most of the Dutch ammunition stocks having been blocked by Serb forces at the Lukavac depot.¹⁰³ Lack of fuel supplies meant that the Dutch were forced to patrol the enclave on foot.

In the days preceding the fall of Srebrenica, General Brigadier Cees Nicolai turned down two requests from the Dutch battalion commander in Srebrenica, Lt. Col. Ton Karremans, for NATO close air support, later arguing that this accorded with the new guidelines on NATO action issued by UNPROFOR commanders on May 29.¹⁰⁴

When the news of the Serb takeover of Srebrenica was announced on July 11, the international response was mixed. In Strasburg, a Franco-German summit on defence and security was in progress and President Chirac, on hearing that NATO was unable to employ air power to protect the UN 'safe area', adjourned the meeting to focus on averting the fall of the enclave.¹⁰⁵ A four-point agreement between Chirac and the German

¹⁰² CORWIN, *op.cit.* p.203.

¹⁰³ HONIG/BOTH, *op.cit.* p.128.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from an interview with General Nicolai in ROHDE, David. *A Safe Area. Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since the Second World War.* Pocket Books, 1997, p.23. See also HONIG/BOTH, *op.cit.* p.8.

¹⁰⁵ As one prominent commentator noted: 'Chirac is not hostage to previous Anglo-French policy...it demolishes the murderous and absurd notion, sustained for nearly four years by UN

President, Helmut Kohl, was produced declaring the support of France and Germany for Dutchbat efforts to restore the enclave to UN control.¹⁰⁶ Admiral Lanxade accordingly requested that US helicopters be made available to fly in 600-800 troops.¹⁰⁷ Chirac pressed for the Security Council to ask the RRF, now deployed in Bosnia, to 'restore the integrity of the Srebrenica zone'.¹⁰⁸ In Italy, President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro offered 2,000 soldiers to save the other enclaves.¹⁰⁹

The United States, meanwhile, deferred to the Netherlands Ministerial Council which, fearing for the safety of its troops in Srebrenica, and especially Bratunac where a number had been detained by VRS forces considered the time for air strikes had passed.¹¹⁰ President Clinton then offered helicopters for the transportation of troops to Gorazde.¹¹¹

and western leaders than one can disarm the victims of genocidal slaughter and protect them without taking their side against the slaughterer'. Professor Albert Wohlstetter. 'Chirac's Challenge on Bosnia', *Wall Street Journal*, July 20, 1995.

¹⁰⁶ *NIOD*, Part 1. Chapter 11, 'Bankruptcy of the International Community'. Interview Jean David Levitte, political adviser to Jacques Chirac.

¹⁰⁷ President Chirac's military adviser, General Quesnot was, according to Bildt, the first to suggest the military recapture of Srebrenica: 'Give me two parachute regiments. I'll jump and retake Srebrenica'. Bildt, however, put the French proposal 'into perspective' and publicly rejected it, arguing that it was not feasible, also (incorrectly) that the Bosnian government had not asked for the enclave to be retaken. See *NIOD*, op.cit. Part II, Chapter 8.

¹⁰⁸ 'I call on the large western democracies to get a grip on themselves and to impose respect for human rights and international law'. Jacques Chirac, quoted in *Guardian*, July 13, 1995. Chirac compared Major's response to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler. *The Times*, July 15, 1995. The heralded cooperation between Britain and France, with the establishment of the rapid reaction force, had already collapsed. For an analysis of the expected military cooperation between France and Britain in former Yugoslavia, see 'Une nouvelle "fraternite d'armes" franco-britannique'. *Le Monde*, June 10, 1995

¹⁰⁹ *La Stampa*, July 15, 1995. A poll taken that week in Italy showed 53% of Italians supported military intervention in Bosnia against the Serbs. A number of prominent Italian politicians, including Foreign Minister Dini, opposed intervention, however. See *La Stampa*, July 19, 1995. however.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo contacted French Foreign Minister Charette, insisting that no air power be used. *Rapport d'information*, op.cit. Interview with former Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo, April 12, 1995.

¹¹¹ *La Stampa*, July 18, 1995. Clinton's reticence in contributing air power was reportedly due in great part to the policy differences between France and Britain. See also *Rapport d'information*, *Ibid.* Interview with former French Prime Minister Alain Juppe, January 24, 2001.

Srebrenica: The British response

Britain responded to the fall of Srebrenica in a number of ways. The Foreign Secretary promptly and publicly repudiated the French initiative. At the Security Council, both Britain and Russia sought to have the Serb action in Srebrenica placed in the context of a violation of the demilitarisation agreement of April 18, 1993, as a departure point for condemnation of the situation in the enclave. The UK Ambassador to the UN, David Hannay, pressed for this to be included in the UN resolution, arguing also that there should be no mention of the Rapid Reaction Force in the resolution, on the grounds that it was not feasible to expel the Serbs from Srebrenica.¹¹² Also, at a Contact Group meeting on July 12 Carl Bildt, supported by the British delegate, dismissed the French initiative as 'unrealistic' and 'absurd'. The US and German representatives, while expressing a preference for a more forceful approach, were nonetheless somewhat muted as neither country was prepared at that point to offer the requisite manpower for the task.¹¹³

On July 12, the day after Srebrenica fell to VRS forces, the newly-appointed Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, made a statement in the House of Commons. In view of the introduction of a Rapid Reaction Force and the considerably more robust French stance, and the then undefined position of the Clinton administration, the British government response to the fall of a UN-declared 'safe area' would have been closely monitored by the Serb leadership in Pale, and the Milosevic regime in Belgrade. Rifkind noted the failure of other UN member states to

¹¹² Academic apologists of the British position argued that Srebrenica could not be saved, and that a large combat force would be required to save the other enclaves. See, for instance, 'Riprendere Srebrenica? Follia'. Susan Woodward in *La Stampa*, July 15, 1995.

¹¹³ There was, however, considerable support for the French initiative within the European Parliament. See *The Times*, Letter to the Editor, July 17, 1995.

contribute troops to Bosnia, and emphasized the shared responsibility of Serb and Bosnian government forces for the fall of Srebrenica.

In June 1993, the UN suggested that up to 36,000 troops could be necessary to implement the safe areas concept. The UK, France and the Netherlands responded well, but many others did not. The total committed amounted to only 7,500, a considerable shortfall. This has had substantial implications for the safe areas policy.¹¹⁴

This was misleading. In June 1993, it was the UK Ambassador who had argued strenuously at the Security Council for the minimalist approach, i.e. a 'light option without formed units', with only a symbolic UN presence in each 'safe area', as opposed to France which had proposed the second option, a 'light option with formed units',¹¹⁵ and the United States and several other Security Council Members who had declared preference for more effective options, which did not include the creation of 'safe areas'. Also, Britain did not offer troops for the 'safe areas' until nearly a year later, when they were required to preempt extensive NATO air strikes against Serb positions in Gorazde.

Mr Rifkind attributed the fall of the enclave to the failure to demilitarise.¹¹⁶

The reality is that neither side properly observed the provisions on demilitarisation. It is this that lies at the root of events over the past few days. For three months, there have been sporadic attacks by each side against the other...fighting escalated over last weekend. During that fighting, one Dutch soldier was killed by Bosnian Government forces.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Malcolm Rifkind, *Bosnia*, *Hansard*, Vol.263, July 12, 1995, c.947.

¹¹⁵ This required a brigade (5,000 troops) in Sarajevo, a battalion (900 troops) each in Bihac and Tuzla, a battalion divided between Srebrenica and Zepa, and a further battalion divided between Gorazde and Foca. See *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.20/74, and p.24/94.

¹¹⁶ The UK Ambassador to the UN at an emergency Security Council meeting the same day, also gave the failure to demilitarize as the main reason for the fall of the enclave: 'It is through demilitarization of [Srebrenica] that the civilian population who wish to do so will be able to remain without fear'. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.66/336.

¹¹⁷ Malcolm Rifkind, *Bosnia*, op.cit. c.947.

The UN Srebrenica Report totally rebuts this argument. On the issue of demilitarisation, it states that

...while it is true that the Bosniac fighters in Srebrenica did not fully demilitarize, they demilitarized enough for UNPROFOR to issue a press release, on 21 April 1993, saying that the process had been a success. Specific instructions from United Nations Headquarters in New York stated that UNPROFOR should not be too zealous in searching for Bosniac weapons and, later, that the Serbs should withdraw their heavy weapons before the Bosniacs gave up their weapons. The Serbs never did withdraw their heavy weapons.¹¹⁸

On the Foreign Secretary's allegation of 'sporadic attacks by each side', the Srebrenica Report states that

the few 'raids' the Bosniacs mounted out of Srebrenica were of little or no military significance. These raids were often organized in order to gather food, as the Serbs had refused access for humanitarian convoys into the enclave. Even Serb sources...acknowledged that the Bosniac forces in Srebrenica posed no significant military threat to them. The biggest attack the Bosniacs launched out of Srebrenica during over two years during which it was designated as a safe area appears to have been the raid on the village of Visnjica, on 26 June 1995, in which several houses were burned, up to four Serbs were killed and approximately 100 sheep were stolen. In contrast, the Serbs overran the enclave two weeks later, driving tens of thousands from their homes, and summarily executing thousands of men and boys. The Serbs repeatedly exaggerated the extent of the 'raids' out of Srebrenica as a pretext for the prosecution of a central war aim: to create a geographically contiguous and ethnically pure territory along the Drina, while freeing up troops to fight in other parts of the country.¹¹⁹

The killing of the Dutch soldier, referred to by the Foreign Secretary, occurred on July 8 as Bosnian government forces opened fire on a Dutch armoured personnel carrier in an attempt to prevent the Dutch forces withdrawing from an observation post at the southern tip of the

¹¹⁸ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.92/475.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.93/479. Significantly, Milosevic, at a meeting with Carl Bildt on July 14, also took the position that 'the whole incident had been provoked by escalating Muslim attacks from the enclave, in violation of the 1993 demilitarization agreement'. Quoted in *Ibid.* p.73/372.

Srebrenica enclave, which they had decided to abandon following a Serb offensive.¹²⁰ Rifkind's reference to the episode at the beginning of his statement suggested an equivalence of guilt, which he emphasized on several occasions during his speech.¹²¹

Mr Rifkind did not condemn the Serb aggression directly, but referred, half-way through his statement, to a draft UN resolution:

At the United Nations, we, the United States, France, Germany and Italy are co-sponsoring a draft resolution...This condemns the Bosnian Serb offensive, demands that the Bosnian Serb forces withdraw immediately from the Srebrenica area, that the Bosnian Serbs immediately release all detained UNPROFOR personnel and that all parties allow unimpeded access for the [UNHCR] and other humanitarian agencies to the safe area to alleviate the plight of the civilian operation; and requests the Secretary General to use the resources available to him to restore the safe area status of Srebrenica.¹²²

Crucially, neither the draft resolution nor the Foreign Secretary's statement included any measures to deter further attacks on UN 'safe areas'. Nor did they reflect the more forceful French position. Asked whether a time-scale had been set in the event of the Serbs not complying, Mr Rifkind replied that the questioner 'must...recognise the

¹²⁰ According to the Bosnian commander, Ramiz Becirovic, there was an informal agreement between the Dutch commander, Colonel Karremans, and himself in early June that the Dutch would warn the Bosnian forces in the event of their withdrawal from an OP in order that they could defend the strategic positions themselves. No warning came from the Dutch, however. See ROHDE, *op.cit.* pp.29-41 for a full account of the episode.

¹²¹ '...the Prime Minister told the House yesterday...that the warring parties had to indicate soon that they were prepared to return to the negotiating table to reach a political solution. That remains the position'. Malcolm Rifkind, *Bosnia*, *op.cit.* c.948. A misleading statement since the Bosnian government had agreed to the Contact Group plan the previous year. When Rifkind had the opportunity to confirm that the Bosnian government had 'consistently shown its willingness to reach a negotiated settlement, whereas the Serbs [had] not', he sidestepped the question. *Ibid* c.962-3.

¹²² *Ibid.* c.948. Humanitarian aid was despatched by the UN to the enclave. However, the Serbs waited till the refugees had departed before allowing in two UN convoys July 14, with 30,000 litres of fuel, several tons of food, and several weeks' supply of medical goods! ROHDE, *op.cit.* p.293.

limits of what he can expect the UN to be able to deliver'.¹²³ Questioned whether the arms embargo might be removed in the event that the Bosnian government requested UNPROFOR to leave, the Foreign Secretary stated that 'the Bosnian Government have said that they would rather that the UN remained in Bosnia than that the embargo should be raised and the UN withdraw'.¹²⁴ Again, this contradicted statements by Bosnian ministers.¹²⁵ Rifkind also stated that 'the US Administration, including President Clinton, have come to the unequivocal view that the lifting of the embargo and the withdrawal of UNPROFOR would be an extremely foolish initiative, and should not be supported'.¹²⁶ It was true that the US was anxious to avoid UNPROFOR withdrawal since this would involve large numbers of its own troops. The arms embargo, on the other hand, had already been partly lifted by the US.

On the French proposal to reverse the situation in Srebrenica, the Foreign Secretary equivocated, stating 'we need to hear the precise details of what they have in mind and whether that is perceived to be a militarily realistic solution to this matter'.¹²⁷ Mr Rifkind also stated unequivocally that

it is no part of the purpose of a rapid reaction force to become a combatant in the conflict. Its purpose will be to assist the force

¹²³ Rifkind, in reply to Tony Banks, *Ibid.* c.964.

¹²⁴ Rifkind, *Ibid.* c.965. See also c.952.

¹²⁵ The following week, Foreign Minister Nicholas Bonsor confirmed that the Bosnian Foreign Minister had indicated he wanted UNPROFOR to withdraw. See *Bosnia*, July 19, 1995, *Hansard*, Vol.263, c.1782. The Bosnian government ordered UNPROFOR to leave by November. *European*, July 21-27, 1995, p.3.

¹²⁶ *Bosnia*, July 12, 1995, *op.cit.* c.966.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* c.951.

commander in the protection of UNPROFOR and to assist with the delivery of UN humanitarian supplies to those who require them.¹²⁸

The unequivocal message conveyed by Britain on the day after Srebrenica fell, both in the House of Commons and at the UN Security Council, was that neither punitive measures against the Bosnian Serbs for their action in Srebrenica, nor deterrent measures to prevent VRS forces from taking Zepa and possibly other enclaves, were contemplated. The following day, July 13, the slaughter of unarmed men and boys began.¹²⁹

Britain's involvement in the international policy shift which led to the end of the war in Bosnia has since been cast by some analysts in a more positive light than the facts suggest. It has been claimed, for instance, that the introduction of a Rapid Reaction Force at the end of May 1995 was (a) a British initiative, and (b) a joint French-British attempt to 'display resolve and operate robustly.'¹³⁰ It has also been argued that the British government was entirely supportive of General Smith's stance on the issue of air strikes throughout.¹³¹ Yet, in the acrimony which grew between Smith, on the one side, and Akashi and Janvier, on the other,

¹²⁸ Ibid. c.958. The following week, Defence Minister Nicholas Soames informed the House that the deployment of the 4,000 personnel would not be completed till mid August. Written Answers, July 19, 1995. *Hansard*, Vol.263, c.1357.

¹²⁹ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.68/346. British journalists in Ljubovija in Serbia, directly across the Drina from Bratunac, reported accounts by Serbs visiting Bosnia of mass executions of 3-4,000 people in Bratunac and other east Bosnian towns. *Independent*, July 21, 1995, p.1, and *Sunday Times*, July 23, 1995, p.13. Similarly, John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights heard credible eyewitness accounts of mass executions of men and boys. *Channel 4 News*, July 24, 1995. As of November 1999, 7,336 individuals from Srebrenica still remained unaccounted for *Srebrenica Report*, Ibid. p.80/409.

¹³⁰ See GOW, J. *Triumph*, op.cit. pp.266-9. Gow, interestingly, describes the RRF as a 'combat-capable' reaction force, which modifies the intended combat aspect of the force without altogether rejecting it, which conflicts with the Foreign Secretary's statement in the House of Commons, as well as the statement the following week by the Defence Secretary. On the original impetus for the RRF, former French ministers claimed that it was a French initiative. *Rapport d'information*, op.cit. Interview with former French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette, May 10, 2001.

¹³¹ GOW, Ibid. p.270.

British ministers were unequivocally supportive of the position adopted by the latter two officials.

British media coverage surrounding the fall of Srebrenica was mixed and, to that extent, may arguably be considered as balanced. While the graphic plight of the civilians fleeing from the enclave dominated most of the press coverage and electronic media, there were a number of programmes and reports which, either directly or tangentially, suggested an equivalence of guilt, reflecting ministerial statements.

One example was an interview by David Frost with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on July 16, just days after the massacres.¹³² In the interview, Karadzic was given the opportunity to discuss his proposals for a solution in Bosnia. A map was produced to assist Karadzic to indicate where territorial changes in Contact Group plan should be made. Moreover, his assertion, that 65% of land in Bosnia was owned by Serbs, and that more Serbs had been expelled from their homes than Muslims or Croats, went unchallenged.

In a televised debate, chaired by Jeremy Paxman, the audience was invited to discuss and vote on (with voting extended to viewers) whether UNPROFOR should remain in Bosnia or leave.¹³³ There was no provision made, however, for the suggestion made by a number of participants that the UN should stay, but *only* on condition that the mandate was revised to permit the use of force. Consequently, the result of the poll showed a large percentage in favour of UNPROFOR remaining in Bosnia (the government position), but did not reflect the conditions attached by many participants who were clearly critical of current British policy on the issue.

¹³² The David Frost Show, *BBC1*, July 16, 1995. The BBC had granted Karadzic an interview in early June 1995 on the 9 O'Clock News, at the height of the hostage crisis.

¹³³ *BBC 2*, July 15, 1995.

A prominently-placed article by a leading *Times* correspondent, Eve-Ann Prentice, offered a relativist analysis of the situation, opining that 'what are perceived as ethically correct solutions would paradoxically probably lead to even more killing'.¹³⁴ Presumably, this referred to the French initiative. *The Times* defence correspondent, Michael Evans, took up another theme. In an article entitled 'Muslim soldiers failed to defend town from Serbs'.¹³⁵ Evans claimed that the Bosnians

only put up a brief fight against the Serbs...The abandonment of Srebrenica to a relatively small Serb advancing force caused surprise in the West, especially after the largely Muslim government army had demonstrated considerable infantry skills in recent attacks...Intelligence sources estimated the main attack was carried out by a [Serb] force of about 200, with five tanks...It was a pretty low-level operation, but for some reason which we can't understand the BiH [government] soldiers didn't put up much of a fight...The BiH just melted away from Srebrenica and the senior officers left the night before...the Muslim defenders were adequately armed for street-fighting. It could be seen by the Serbs as an invitation to move on to the next Muslim enclaves.¹³⁶

The argument was not dissimilar to that of General Michael Rose the previous year when he upbraided the Bosnians for not putting up a stronger fight in defence of Gorazde, and it was equally inaccurate, particularly in view of the scale of the VRS offensive.¹³⁷ Also, the correspondent's assessment of the Bosnian defence in Srebrenica at the time differed markedly from that of General Smith.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ *The Times*, July 20, 1995, p.15.

¹³⁵ *The Times*, July 14, 1995.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ For a contemporary exploration of the 'intelligence sources' informing controversial articles (in this case on the Chechen war), also with reference to Michael Evans, see CLOGG, Richard. 'Disinformation in Chechnya: an anatomy of a deception'. *Central Asian Survey*, 16(3), 1997, pp.425-430.

¹³⁸ According to General Smith, there were not more than 1,200 armed men in Srebrenica by early 1995. Milosevic Trial, *ICTY*, October 9, 2003, p.27384.

Another journalist condemned 'the motives of the Bosnian government [which] was secretly prepared to see the safe areas fall...using the enclaves as military staging points and re-supply dumps.'¹³⁹ Yet another, reporting from Belgrade, described a film made in Serbia of an attack in December 1992 when Bosniacs attacked two Serb villages killing 63 people, commenting that 'some victims were hacked with knives'.¹⁴⁰ While this may have been an attempt to put the July 1995 events into some perspective it also, in the circumstances, indicated a lack of judgment.

There has since been much speculation as to the information available internationally concerning a planned Serb assault on Srebrenica. Most senior international players interviewed later insisted that there had been no previous indication that the enclave might be overrun by VRS forces, or of the likelihood of massacres.¹⁴¹ *Medicins sans Frontieres*, in an article in *La Croix*, categorically refute that claim, however, stating that on June 17, 1995, nearly a month before Srebrenica fell, the French and American intelligence services had intercepted a communication between General Perisic, Chief of Staffs of the Serbian army (VJ) and Bosnian Serb Commander General Mladic, indicating that the two men were preparing an attack against Srebrenica.¹⁴² Also, a confidential report dated June 26 was reportedly sent to the UN and the British government by General Smith's office in Sarajevo. Delivered to the government by a UN official, the report stated that if the Bosnian army

¹³⁹ Nik Gowing, *Sunday Telegraph*, July 16, 1995, p.21.

¹⁴⁰ Tim Judah, *Ibid*.

¹⁴¹ Testimony by Rupert Smith at the Milosevic Trial, *op.cit. ICTY*, October 9, 2003, p.27328. See also *Rapport d'information*, *op.cit.* Interviews with Hans Van Mierlo and Joris Vanhoove, April 12, 2001, and Herve de Charette, May 10, 2001.

¹⁴² Quoted by the Balkans Director of *Medicins sans frontieres*, Pierre Salignon, in *Rapport d'information*, *Ibid*. May 17, 2001. Salignon believed that the massacres subsequent to the fall of Vukovar (where Msf had also been working in 1991) made the incidence of massacres predictable after a Serb takeover of Srebrenica.

continued to fight around Sarajevo the Serbs would try to take the enclaves, in order to free their soldiers to fight elsewhere.¹⁴³

Adding to the speculation is the fact that several senior UN officers went on leave just before the Serb offensive, including several of Yasushi Akashi's staff in Zagreb.¹⁴⁴ General Smith had also been on leave since the beginning of July. In the French enquiry into the events leading to the fall of Srebrenica, the absence of General Smith throughout the Srebrenica crisis was cited by a number of those interviewed as a source of concern.¹⁴⁵ General Herve Gobillard, who was appointed to replace Smith, informed the enquiry that he had not known of Smith's absence for several days, and was not briefed on Srebrenica until three days before the enclave fell.¹⁴⁶ General Smith's refusal to be interviewed for the French enquiry in 2001 further compounded the speculation.¹⁴⁷

Another issue discussed at some length in the French enquiry, was the technical argument advanced for the lack of UN or NATO action in Srebrenica, that there were not the ground controllers present to guide the NATO planes.¹⁴⁸ It later emerged that there were in fact two teams in

¹⁴³ One British military source was reported as commenting, 'so much for the line that [the fall of Srebrenica this week] was a terrible shock'. Ibid. UN officials in Sarajevo later shrugged off the document. UN spokesperson Lt. Coward commented, 'We were aware of the dangers. There was not much the UN could have done'. *The Times*, July 15, 1995.

¹⁴⁴ This included a British brigadier. See HARTMANN, *op.cit.* p.338.

¹⁴⁵ See *Rapport d'information*, *op.cit.* Interviews with Generals Jean Cot, February 8, 2001, and Herve Gobillard, March 1, 2001,

¹⁴⁶ 'I was plunged into the Srebrenica crisis without any preparation on the zone'. General Herve Gobillard, Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ One witness testifying in the Krstic trial at the Hague, attributed the absence in Srebrenica of SGRS Yasushi Akashi, EC envoy Carl Bildt and General Rupert Smith for the method in which Srebrenica fell: 'Had the whole commanding mechanism of UNPROFOR been actively involved in the situation, I believe that the whole procedure, the whole operation, would have been carried out ... in a more orderly fashion and with much less serious consequences'. Radovan Radinovic, Krstic Trial, *ICTY*, December 5, 2000, p.7961.

¹⁴⁸ See *Rapport d'information*, *op.cit.* Interview with Herve Gobillard, March 1, 2001. This was disputed by other interviewees who argued that the Dutch ground controllers remained in position,

the enclave at the time, one from the Netherlands and another from Britain.¹⁴⁹ Years later, one of the British team attempted to publish his memoirs. Writing under the pseudonym 'Nick Cameron', a former SAS sergeant and Military Cross holder, leading a 3-man British special forces patrol which was secretly in Srebrenica under UN command when the enclave was overrun by VRS forces, claimed in an article in *The Sunday Times* that, according to Cameron's SAS commander, there had never been any plan to defend Srebrenica. The article was scheduled as the first of a series. Shortly after the first article appeared, however, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) threatened 'Cameron' with legal proceedings if he published further similar material. A year later, facing trial for unauthorized disclosures about his service in Bosnia, 'Cameron' agreed, in an out-of-court settlement, not to publish similar material without MoD permission. Cameron also paid £75,000 in MoD legal costs.¹⁵⁰

House of Commons. July 19, 1995

The first full parliamentary debate on Srebrenica was held at the House of Commons on July 19. It was opened by the new Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo who, although evidently not fully acquainted with his brief,¹⁵¹ generally confirmed (albeit less suavely than his predecessor) the government position as laid out by the Foreign Secretary the previous week. The rumours filtering through of mass killings and thousands missing, VRS attacks on other 'safe areas', and the imminent fall of another eastern enclave, Zepa, had not produced a change in the

but were not called on.

¹⁴⁹ *Medicins sans frontieres'* Balkans Director Pierre Salignon, commented that 'Curiously, the existence of [the British team] was never officially acknowledged by the British government'.

¹⁵⁰ *Sunday Times*, July 7, 2002, editorial. Reproduced by the Bosnian Institute, News & Analysis section, and *Scotsman*, July 4, 2003.

¹⁵¹ He appeared, for instance, to be under the impression that 7,000 Dutch, British and Ukranian troops were deployed in the enclaves, instead of the few hundred actually there. *Bosnia. Hansard*, Vol.263, July 19, 1995, c.1743.

British government position. Drawing a symmetry of guilt, Mr Portillo declared that

In the former Yugoslavia, we have seen European man at his absolute worst. All sides have been guilty of slaughter, rape and other atrocities...all the parties have degraded themselves, and...degraded humanity...

To bring this war to an end militarily would require the commitment of hundreds of thousands of men, equipment and armaments, at enormous risk to those forces...our chances of success would be remote...the only way that this war can end is by political settlement.¹⁵²

Similar utterances had been made on numerous occasions by government ministers since 1991.¹⁵³ The difference now was that the new Defence Secretary was imminently to be proved wrong, as the NATO action which ended the war was just six weeks away. Significantly, however, it was clear that the British government was not contemplating force in Bosnia except for the protection of its troops in Gorazde.¹⁵⁴ This 'line drawn in the sand' at Gorazde was a new development which was to be expanded on at the London Conference two days later. Otherwise, the signals remained the same. The Defence Secretary confirmed that 'there has been no change in the UN's mandate. The extra forces are not there to make war...'¹⁵⁵ No reference was made to Zepa or the other UN 'safe areas'.

¹⁵² Michael Portillo, *Bosnia*, July 19, 1995, op.cit. c.1740-1.

¹⁵³ This position was also reiterated in this debate by former foreign secretary Douglas Hurd from the back benches: 'I do not believe that it is possible, from the air, to bomb the Bosnian Serbs into coming to the conference table and reaching a peaceful settlement...No solution can be imposed from outside except...if we had sent a large international force...' Ibid. c.1753-4.

¹⁵⁴ 'I want to make it absolutely clear to the House that anyone who harms them will be held personally responsible by the Government of the United Kingdom'. Michael Portillo, Ibid. c.1744.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. c.1743.

Foreign Minister Nicholas Bonsor, closing the debate, also confirmed that 'we are not in Bosnia to fight a war',¹⁵⁶ and that 'the rapid reaction force is clearly not there as a fighting force'.¹⁵⁷ Echoing the Defence Secretary, Mr Bonsor opined that escalation 'into a war in which we become directly involved' was an option which

I do not believe either the House or the British people wish us to take... the danger to our troops and to the humanitarian aid people would be out of any proportion to any impact that we could make in finding a proper solution to the conflict...The Government's preference is clear and unequivocal - we remain convinced that UNPROFOR has a key role to play and we want it to stay.¹⁵⁸

All three ministers quoted the casualty toll in Bosnia over three years of war to justify the UNPROFOR presence: '130,000 dead in 1992, as opposed to 2,500 in 1994'.¹⁵⁹ This grossly misrepresented the situation, however, since the Bosnian Serbs having gained control over 70% of Bosnia-Herzegovina before the end of 1992 mostly focused thereafter (with the exception of the Drina valley) on consolidating and defending the frontline. Mr Bonsor compounded the deception in declaring that 'in the British-controlled area, it is only the presence of our troops that prevents the renewal of the conflict between the Croat and Bosniac sides'.¹⁶⁰ The Bosniac-Croat conflict had, of course, erupted just miles from the British UNPROFOR headquarters in Vitez in 1993, and was ended through US mediation. By 1995, it was in the mutual interest of both communities to join forces against the Serbs. Bonsor's argument was, therefore, somewhat specious.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. c.1741.

¹⁵⁷ Nicholas Bonsor, Ibid. c.1783.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas Bonsor, Ibid. c.1781. See also Michael Portillo, Ibid. c.1742, and Malcolm Rifkind, Bosnia, July 12, 1995, op.cit. c.949.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas Bonsor, Ibid. c.1781. Shadow Foreign Secretary Robin Cook seemed to be under a similar misapprehension. See Ibid. c.1747.

Srebrenica: The US Position

The fall of Srebrenica prompted an increasing number of US Congress members, both Republican and Democratic, to announce their support for a Republican bill whereby the US would unilaterally lift the arms embargo against Bosnia.¹⁶¹ The US Senate also voted 69/29 to require President Clinton to lift the embargo. Under complex US legislative rules, however, the House of Representatives had first to pass its own version, the two houses had to agree on the text of the final Bill, and it again needed a two thirds majority to survive a White House veto. It would also take effect only after UNPROFOR withdrawal. However, although there were no immediate consequences for UNPROFOR, it could encourage Islamic states to breach embargo openly.¹⁶²

Clinton was in a Catch 22 situation. Lifting the embargo would lead to UN withdrawal which Clinton had already pledged to assist with up to 25,000 troops. France was already threatening to withdraw its 6,000 troops if its allied did not back a firmer stance against the Serbs. The difficulties in the withdrawal option, however, suggested that both the UN and NATO troops could be drawn into a bloody battle and suffer humiliation. It was at this point that Clinton decided on larger-scale NATO air strikes as the preferable option although, according to Richard Holbrooke, it was not until the Clinton administration was briefed by NATO planners in early June that US policy makers accepted the high probability of US troop involvement in the fighting.¹⁶³ Holbrooke

¹⁶¹ This would enable the Bosnian government to acquire artillery, armoured vehicles, anti-tank guided missiles and transport and communications equipment, plus the ammunition to help exploit the Bosnian army's advantage in manpower. The combined Bosniac and Croat forces numbered 160,000 at this point, as against 75,000 VRS. *Independent on Sunday*, July 30, 1995.

¹⁶² A number of Islamic states, including Malaysia and Egypt, had already pronounced the arms embargo a dead letter, however, pledging military assistance to Bosnia, while a Saudi paper called on the Islamic world to wage a jihad against the Bosnian Serbs. *The Times*, July 24, 1995, p.8.

assessed that the policy was facing defeat, which would inevitably mean US military involvement either way. It was therefore preferable that the involvement be built on success rather than failure.

The United States was in an entirely different position from the previous year. Bihac had illustrated that Britain not only would not move on the lift and strike issue, but had acted to deter a US initiative to the point of jeopardising the safety of NATO planes. Also, the British commander on the ground had leaked information to the Serbs who were equipped with a new air defence system. This combination of factors, which had caused the US to withdraw in November 1994, also gave pause for thought in July 1995. The renewed US incentive to use force to end the war coincided with that of the French president.¹⁶⁴

The changes on the ground in the Spring and Summer of 1995, as the Croatian and Bosnian government forces strengthened, were critical to the US decision. Indeed, it was reported that the US had given a green light (or an amber light tinted green) for the Croatian army operation.¹⁶⁵ Since mid-1993, when the failure of the Vance-Owen plan had given way to the 'safe areas' policy, and hostilities had flared between Croats and Bosniacs in Central Bosnia, the US approach had been to strengthen Croatia as a strategic counterweight to Serbia, forging a Bosnian-Croat alliance to counter the Bosnian Serb army.

London Conference. July 21, 1995

Foreign and defence ministers from fifteen countries representing troop contributing nations, as well as UN Security Council Members, the UN

¹⁶³ See BURG/SOUP, op.cit. p.324.

¹⁶⁴ For the American debate, see also 'The Military Balance in Bosnia and Its Effect on the Prospects for Peace'. Special Report 14. *The United States Institute for Peace (USIP)*, August 1995.

¹⁶⁵ *Guardian*, July 31, 1995, p.7.

Secretariat, the EU and NATO, convened on July 21 for a conference in London, called by the British Prime Minister, and chaired by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind.¹⁶⁶

The London Conference has often since been described as a turning point in international policy, marking the point when the international community finally decided to use NATO air power to end the war. So far as the British government was concerned, however, the conference had a much narrower remit, namely, to preempt a VRS attack on Gorazde where British troops were deployed, and to detract from their Western allies' more ambitious plans.

The Prime Minister, John Major, set out four specific objectives: (i) to enable UNPROFOR to remain in Bosnia, so long as it was not subjected to unacceptable risk, (ii) to agree a way of deterring further aggression, especially in Gorazde, (iii) to offer more support to international negotiators, and (iv) to address problems experienced by aid workers.¹⁶⁷ The statements issued after the Conference represented a wide range of views, from the Canadians who reportedly understood that all 'safe areas' were to receive UN protection, and the French who wanted to use the rapid reaction force to protect and/or retake the eastern enclaves, to the Russians who opposed any military intervention whatsoever.¹⁶⁸ The final statement read by Malcolm Rifkind reflected the British position, in stipulating that 'any attack on Gorazde will be met with a substantial

¹⁶⁶ It was later described by a number of participants as an *ad hoc* gathering, with little documentation prepared in advance and no consensus reached at the end. *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.79/406.

¹⁶⁷ Major was quoted, however, as describing the Conference as a desperate effort to keep the UN show on the road. *Guardian*, July 22, 1995, p.1, and *Daily Telegraph*, July 22, 1995, p.10.

¹⁶⁸ One observer described it as 'a cacophony of conflicting emphases and statements', with only minimal and equivocal consensus amongst the major powers, encouraging Serb leaders, who weigh every nuance in an attempt to gauge what they could get away with next. Ian Traynor, *Guardian*, July 22, 1995, p.14.

and decisive response, including the use of air power'.¹⁶⁹ It was the first time during the Bosnian war that a British minister had issued such a specific military threat. Approximately 300 Royal Welch Fusiliers were still trapped in Gorazde, and could only exit with the permission of the VRS forces surrounding the enclave. Significantly, Rifkind did not mention the other 'safe areas'.¹⁷⁰

British leaders had endeavoured to strike a balance in any military threat to the Serbs which would satisfy the demand for more effective action from America, France and the British public, while at the same time not alienating the Serb leadership to the point of endangering the lives of British troops in the enclave. Hence, the focus on Gorazde alone. As Britain had called and hosted the conference, the British statement was the most definitive to emerge.¹⁷¹ However, as the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Tadeusz Mazowiecki pointed out, 'not a single word' was mentioned about Zepa at the London Conference. One week later, Mazowiecki resigned, writing to the Secretary-General that

Events in recent weeks in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and above all the fact that the United Nations has allowed Srebrenica and Zepa to fall, along with the horrendous tragedy which has beset the population of those 'safe havens' guaranteed by international agreements, oblige me to state that I do not see any possibility of continuing the mandate of Special Rapporteur.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.80/406. Carl Bildt had already warned Milosevic that the 'international community would not tolerate an attack on Gorazde' at a meeting in Dobanovci as early as July 14. Ibid. p.73/372.

¹⁷⁰ A role for the Rapid Reaction Force was envisaged in the protection of aid deliveries to Sarajevo, but not to break the siege of the city.

¹⁷¹ There was also reportedly pressure from Belgrade to prevent Gorazde, although not the other 'safe areas' from falling. GLENNY, Misha. *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, war and the great powers*, Granta, 1999, p.650. If this was the case, it demonstrated another instance of contiguity between the British position and that of Serbian President Milosevic.

¹⁷² *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.80/408.

Significantly, on the day before the Conference, General Mladic had informed General Smith that Zepa had also been captured by Serb forces, false information, confirmed however by the British UN spokesperson in Zagreb, Chris Gunness.¹⁷³ General Smith's proposal, that Zepa be demilitarised and the Serbs threatened with air strikes if they persisted in their offensive, was subsequently rejected by General Janvier on the grounds that no commitment had been made to Zepa at the Conference.¹⁷⁴

The Conference had created a pause, deflecting from the US/French rapprochement on the international Balkans policy, and delaying effective US action as President Clinton, following the Foreign Secretary's visit to Washington, appealed to Democrats in Congress to postpone their vote on a resolution to lift the arms embargo till after the London Conference.¹⁷⁵

The Bosnian government declared the London Conference an unmitigated failure. It was also considered a defeat for the US administration which had urged full-scale air strikes in response to attacks on all the 'safe areas', and fuelled the momentum to lift the arms embargo. There were open admissions of international division, which were exemplified in the failure to produce an agreed final communiqué. The only clear message from western states was that any attack on Gorazde would meet 'a substantial and decisive response'.¹⁷⁶ But even this threat was generally viewed as lacking in substance.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ *The Times*, July 21, 1995.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p.81/417.

¹⁷⁵ *The Times*, July 20, 1995, p.15.

¹⁷⁶ British officials later said the Serbs would be given a "clear ultimatum" privately. *Guardian*, July 22, 1995. p.1.

¹⁷⁷ *The Times*. Editorial, July 22, 1995.

The focus on Gorazde, and the exclusion of other UN 'safe areas' in the London Conference final statement, had a number of consequences, and exacerbated international divisions.¹⁷⁸ The VRS forces responded to the omission of other 'safe areas' in the communiqué by shelling Sarajevo, Zepa and Bihac. Zepa was critical as it was on the verge of falling, with no guarantee that its inhabitants would not undergo the same fate as those in Srebrenica. But the situation in Bihac, which was at this time being invaded in a pincer movement by Serb forces from both Bosnia and Croatia was, from the strategic viewpoint, was more serious still.¹⁷⁹ A Serb takeover of Bihac ran the risk of involvement from Croatia whose foreign minister had already written to the Security Council on July 20 warning that the Serb capture, and the expulsion of the 180,000 inhabitants non-Serbs from Bihac would threaten Croatian security, and force Croatia to take measures to protect the enclave.¹⁸⁰ On July 23, the Bosnian and Croatian presidents signed an agreement of cooperation in Split to combat 'Serb aggression'.

President Chirac maintained pressure for action to protect both Zepa and Gorazde. Yet UNPROFOR did not have orders to reinforce Zepa.¹⁸¹ Two days after the London Conference, the enclave had still not fallen,¹⁸² and the Bosnian leadership declared a reluctance to evacuate it.¹⁸³ An internal UNPROFOR meeting was held to determine how to proceed. An earlier proposal, to demilitarise Zepa and threaten the Serbs with air strikes if they attacked, was supported by General Smith, but preempted

¹⁷⁸ Major had intended to leave the conference directly after his speech, but was impelled to stay on into the afternoon, brokering bilateral deals with delegates. See SELDON, *op.cit.* p.592.

¹⁷⁹ *The Times*, editorial, July 22, 1995.

¹⁸⁰ *The Herald*, July 22, 1995, p.7.

¹⁸¹ General Smith reportedly informed Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic of this. CORWIN, *op.cit.* p.224.

¹⁸² *Srebrenica Report*, *op.cit.* p.81/415.

¹⁸³ For the continuing defence of Zepa by the Bosnian military at the time of the London Conference, see ROHDE, *op.cit.* p.325.

by General Janvier in Zagreb who pointed out that the London Conference had made no mention of force to deter attacks on Zepa.¹⁸⁴ On July 25, following an agreement reached with local Zepa forces, there was a mass Serb-orchestrated evacuation. The Bosnian government forces withdrew into Serbia, surrendering themselves to VJ forces.¹⁸⁵ Apologists for British government policy on Zepa later insisted that its collapse was inevitable.¹⁸⁶ The UN Srebrenica Report disagreed, however, asserting that Zepa fell because 'the international community lacked the capacity to do anything other than to accept its fall as a *fait accompli*'.¹⁸⁷

Major had achieved another victory over his Western allies, however. For Britain, the protection of Gorazde where British troops were stationed was essential. The conference ultimatum took care of this concern, while appearing to be more forceful than in fact it was.

The British victory on this occasion was short-lived, however. On August 4, the Croatian army launched a full-scale offensive against Serb-held territory in Krajina, and took over its administrative centre in Knin. 200,000 Serbs fled from Croatia, many to Banja Luka, leading to the further expulsion of non-Serbs there.¹⁸⁸ The HV action resulted in relieving pressure on Bosnian government forces in Bihac, and facilitated their subsequent defeat of the forces loyal to Fikret Abdic whose defences collapsed, along with his recently established 'Republic of Western Bosnia'.

¹⁸⁴ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.81/417.

¹⁸⁵ As of November 1999, there were still 118 persons unaccounted for from Zepa. Ibid. p.84/431.

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, GOW, 1997. op.cit. p.273.

¹⁸⁷ *Srebrenica Report*, op.cit. p.94/487.

¹⁸⁸ *Srebrenica Report*, Ibid. p.84/433-4.

The Croatian army also managed to dislodge the VRS forces from the territory between the Bihac enclave and Western Herzegovina. For the first time during the war, the Bosnian Serbs began to take significant losses.

Operation Storm had a major impact on the Bosnian war, and was quietly welcomed by the Clinton administration, although not by the British government and EU envoy, Carl Bildt.

Operation Deliberate Force

On August 28, 37 people were killed and over 90 wounded by five rounds fired from Serb-held territory near Lukavica. After consultation with the commander of NATO Southern Command, General Smith turned the 'key', and operation Deliberate Force began on August 30, targeting the Serb air defence system, ammunition bunkers and heavy weapons positions. Despite threats, the expected 'massive retaliation' by Serb forces did not materialise.¹⁸⁹ General Mladic acknowledged the 'considerable damage' to Bosnian Serb facilities, and the vulnerability of 'Republika Srpska' as a result of the NATO action, and sought peace talks. Within three days, General Smith was able to open the land route into Sarajevo, linking the centre with Butmir to local civilian traffic, without clearance or inspection. Bosnian Serb Deputy Momcilo Krajisnik's warning of 'heavy consequences' if the roads were opened without Serb consent Smith countered with the threat that any attempt by Serbs to interfere with road traffic would be met by 'disproportionate force'. For first time since May 1992, civilian vehicles were moving unimpeded between Sarajevo and the outside world. The threat of force had worked, and the siege was at an end.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p.86/444.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. p.87/450.

The UN Secretariat now took a different view of NATO air power, reflecting the change in international policy, and emphasized that the UNPROFOR decisions were consistent with UNSCR 836, and a precondition for UNPROFOR 'to perform its humanitarian mandate and to uphold *responsibility to deter attacks against safe areas*'.¹⁹¹ There was a different nuance, however. When a spokesperson for General Smith stated that 'the aim is to cripple the BSA war machine and render its capabilities so devalued that General Mladic is forced to negotiate', the Secretariat objected, instructing the UN in Sarajevo to curb its 'verbal bloodlust'.¹⁹² The same spokesperson continued, however:

We're into peace enforcement here. peace enforcement is not negotiating...We've seen that; it has failed over the years here. We are saying "If you do not do this, no conditions, you continue to get bombed".¹⁹³

General Smith later stated that

As a result of our enforcement action UNPROFOR abandoned its peacekeeping mission - at least in the Sarajevo area. We remain, for the time being, in the position of combatants; coercing and enforcing our demands on the BSA.¹⁹⁴

Smith also proposed that the UNPROFOR rules of engagement be altered. On September 6 NATO began to target Bosanski Brod in the north, prompting further criticism from the UN Secretariat.¹⁹⁵ On September 10, NATO suppressed the Serb air defence system in the Banja Luka area provoking, for the first time, a strong Russian protest. On September 13, a ceasefire agreement was signed by the Bosnian Serb

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p.88/452. Italics in original.

¹⁹² Ibid. p.88/453-4.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p.88/454.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p.88/452-5.

leadership and, since compliance appeared satisfactory, Operation Deliberate Force formally ended on September 21, making way for a peace settlement at Dayton, Ohio, two months later.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

Several factors combined in 1995 to bring about a major shift in the international approach to the Bosnian war, in both military and political terms. Lt. General Sir Rupert Smith, the new British UN commander, broke the UNPROFOR tradition of Serb appeasement introduced in 1992 by General Lewis Mackenzie and continued by Smith's predecessor, General Sir Michael Rose, and the Croatian and Bosnian forces were empowered through the partial US waiving of the UN arms embargo. Meanwhile, the undermanned VRS forces were experiencing increasing difficulty in maintaining the front lines. The Croatian offensive in Western Slavonia, where Krajina Serb forces were routed in under two days, was a foretaste of what lay ahead. Also, the new French presidency, with Gaullist leader Jacques Chirac replacing Francois Mitterand, heralded a new era in France's Balkans policy, reflecting to some extent the fresh approach at UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo. These changes resonated little in Whitehall, however. While British government ministers expressed verbal support for General Smith's call for air strikes on Serb positions, they also stressed that the new 'theatre force' being despatched to Bosnia was for UNPROFOR protection only, and not intended for combat action. The British position was now growing untenable, however, as the maintenance of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina on its existing mandate was increasingly challenged on all sides.

From the fall of Srebrenica onwards, it was mainly a damage limitation exercise. Britain had temporarily forfeited its 'special relations' status

¹⁹⁶ For the Dayton Accords, see map 5, p.352.

with the United States, it had lost France's support at the UN Security Council, and it had lost direct control of the situation on the ground, as Lt. General Rupert Smith determined to confront the Bosnian Serbs. Finally, the policy of looking to Serbian President Milosevic as the key to the successful management of the Bosnian crisis had, in Srebrenica, backfired. Britain's attempt to maintain the status quo, including the continuation of UNPROFOR on the same limited mandate, and the illusion of a progressive peace process, was overtaken by developments on the ground and in other Western capitals. France, rebuffed over Srebrenica and Gorazde, and with a French president anxious to restore the reputation of the French army sorely tested in a three-year abortive peacekeeping role, resolved to withdraw its UN troops at the earliest opportunity.

British government ministers gradually adjusted to the new situation, while insisting that UNPROFOR remain and uphold the relativist policy of 'guilt equivalence', its non-combat role especially important while British troops remained in Gorazde. The requirement to focus on the security of Gorazde dominated the London Conference and implied the tacit sanctioning of VRS attacks on other enclaves. This led to a VRS onslaught on Bihac which, ironically, hastened the Croatian military action, both in Krajina and Bihac, in alliance with the ABiH, resulting in the defeat of the VRS forces besieging the enclave.

United States policy was also becoming more focused, as President Clinton found it increasingly difficult to sustain a credible defence against an eventual lifting of the arms embargo which would lead to French, and possibly British, withdrawal involving US troops in an opposed ground operation. At Clinton's request, the Senate and Congress had withheld a resolution on the arms embargo till after the London Conference. The embargo vote just days later resolved Clinton to act to end the war, either through negotiation or air strikes, in conjunction with Bosnian and Croat forces on the ground. In this, he

had the support of General Smith, the UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as France, Croatia and, of course, the Bosnian government.

Many analysts critical of Clinton's policy have argued that the US was always in a position to act to end the war. This was technically true, but Clinton was a leader who strove to maintain a consensus, particularly within NATO, and was loath to order air strikes with allied troops on the ground. Lifting the arms embargo without air support would have risked the East/West confrontation so many feared. It would also have implied a direct US responsibility in the final outcome, a burden which Clinton had thus far avoided. The shift in the military balance on the ground, however, which the US had worked to bring about since late 1993, plus the shift in French policy, created the conditions for air strikes to assist in a political settlement.

Britain, on the other hand, had lost ground on both its twin pillars of policy. The UNPROFOR operation, despite the Defence Secretary's protestations to the contrary, had lost its *raison d'etre* after Srebrenica and Zepa. And the peace process could not be redeemed by the endeavours of the loyal but ineffectual EU envoy, Carl Bildt. General Smith, for months opposing British policy, now had the support of the US and France, and the authority on behalf of the UN to turn the dual key. When, on August 28, a Serb mortar hit the Sarajevo Markale market killing over 30 civilians, the British UN commander led an international ground and air assault which, paradoxically, brought to an end the British-led international policy which had prevailed for four years.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the specific role of Britain in Yugoslavia and its successor states between 1991 and 1995, and has demonstrated that Britain led the international 'consensus' at crucial points in the war, frustrating initiatives aimed at effective military intervention or otherwise redressing the military imbalance on the ground, and that this resulted in prolonging the war, and promoting the interests of the Belgrade and Pale regimes.

Britain was particularly well placed to assume a dominant European role in addressing a conflict in its south-eastern flank. As an influential member of the European Community and the Western European Union, Britain also enjoyed a privileged status within NATO as a leading European military and nuclear power, with special links to the United States and, as a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, had disproportionate influence within the UN in regard to issues such as the arms embargo, sanctions and other resolutions related to the Balkans war, as well as the appointment of senior UN personnel on the ground.

The breakup of Yugoslavia came about almost simultaneously with that of the Soviet Union, and brought another dimension to Britain's vision of its future in the aftermath of the Cold War. Initially, Britain strove, along with other European states and the United States, to hold Yugoslavia together. The balkanisation of the SFRJ was not in anyone's interests, especially when much of the world was contending with the fallout from the Gulf War, and the wider Middle East issues, as well as grappling to address the even greater implications of the Soviet disintegration. Once the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation seemed inevitable, and was recognised by most international institutions as

having disintegrated, Europe's leaders were, above all, concerned to prevent a balkanisation of Europe itself, where European powers lined up on different sides, as in the lead-up to World War I.

The European Community took over the management of the Yugoslav war on behalf of the international community during 1991, when most of the crucial decisions which were to govern international policy in Yugoslavia and its successor states till the summer of 1995 were made. These included the imposition of a blanket UN arms embargo over Yugoslavia, the decision (publicly declared) to reject international military intervention to halt the hostilities, and the institution of a permanent peace conference, with a mandate to achieve a negotiated settlement acceptable to all sides, without recourse to military action, in all of which Britain had a leading role. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd rejected out of hand the French proposal, first made in July 1991, to despatch a WEU force to Croatia, as well as the later Franco-German approach to the UN to intervene militarily, which was also supported by Italy and a number of other countries.

The French and British positions were slowly to converge, however, initially at the prompting of World War II veteran and former Conservative MP Sir Fitzroy Maclean who assumed a mediation role between Belgrade and Paris. In November 1991, Britain and France steered a Belgrade proposal through the UN Security Council to deploy a UN peacekeeping force to Croatia within the Serb enclaves, which later became known as the 'Vance Plan', after a former US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance who, under the mantle of the UN, fronted the plan. It was a measure which suited the objectives of the Belgrade regime, but not those of the Croatian government which recognised the plan as one which indefinitely froze Serb territorial gains acquired by force.

The subsequent (allegedly premature) recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was based on the broad recommendations of the Badinter

Commission, a Franco-German initiative in which Britain was represented, but did not head. As has been demonstrated, however, international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia as sovereign states was almost inevitable after Milosevic's rejection of the peace plan, and did not confer on the new state many of the benefits normally anticipated, in particular territorial integrity, and the right to self defence. Croatia was recognised on the understanding that approximately one third of its territory would be occupied on a long-term basis by UN troops whose mandate it was to protect the Serb-held enclaves, yet who were not equipped to assist in the return of non-Serb refugees to their homes. Similarly, the international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992 was not accompanied by any international commitment to defend its borders and prevent the JNA from transferring its arsenal and manpower from Croatia into Bosnia which, together with the RAM project, resulted in an acute military imbalance in that state.

The deployment of UN troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, requested by Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (and advised by an EC monitoring team) in late 1991 as a preventive measure before the onset of war, was rejected by the United Nations in January 1992 on the recommendation of a British diplomat, Murrack Goulding, then UN Under Secretary-General for political affairs, following his visit to Sarajevo and Belgrade. Goulding made a second visit to Bosnia in May the same year when the war was already in progress, again advising the UN Secretary-General against a UN operation there. It was not until the following autumn, by which time the VRS forces, with the assistance of the JNA and Serbian paramilitaries, had already taken control of around 70% of Bosnian territory, that the British government initiated a proposal to deploy a small number of lightly-armed UN troops into the war zone in a non-combat role, to escort humanitarian aid. The decision was taken during the British EC Presidency at the time of the London Conference. As the UN Srebrenica Report later emphasized, however, this was not a problem with a humanitarian solution. The Report concluded that,

while lives may have been saved by the UNPROFOR mission, their work could not fully redeem a policy that was, at best, a half measure, and that a systematic and ruthless campaign such as the one conducted by the Serbs would view the UN humanitarian operation, not as an obstacle, but as an instrument of its aims. In fact, the UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia, which ensured the continuation of the UN arms embargo and provided potential hostages, was essential to the success of the Serb strategy for, while able to conduct and, with relative ease, win a battle on one front at a time the Serb forces, notwithstanding their superior armoury, and financial and other support from Belgrade, found it increasingly difficult by 1995 to defend all the frontlines, as the Croatian and Bosnian armies became more professional, and acquired a degree of heavy weaponry.

A sufficiently robust UN force deployed within the UN-declared 'safe areas' would have conveyed the message to the Serb leadership that the UN was serious in intent to fulfill the terms of the resolution. Yet, when three options for troop deployment were placed before the Security Council by the French representative, Britain insisted on the 'minimalist' option, rejecting offers from a number of Islamic countries willing to contribute on the basis that they were unacceptable to the Bosnian Serb leadership. Neither Britain nor France were themselves prepared to offer further troops. France, unlike Britain, however, had already committed several thousand troops in two 'safe areas' (Sarajevo and Bihac). Britain and France also wielded considerable control over UNPROFOR on the ground, both with regard to decision-making and the crucial routing of aid supplies, as noted by UN troop contributors from smaller countries. Two of the five UN commanders deployed to Bosnia during the war were from Britain, as well as several high-ranking British army officers who exercised considerable control on the ground. One instance of this was when the British Chief of Staff, Brigadier Vere Hayes, second in command to the Belgian UN Commander, Francis Briquemont, acted to foil a NATO initiative for air strikes over Mt. Igman in 1993.

Lt. General Sir Michael Rose, who succeeded General Briquemont as UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina from January 1994, was one of the few UN commanders in Bosnia to last the full term of his contract. General Rose did not confine his duties in Bosnia to soldiering, however, but also took an active part in the negotiating process. In this, he had the full support of the British government, but soon came into confrontation with NATO leaders, to the point that NATO eventually threatened to withhold details of its flight plans from General Rose, fearing they might be disclosed to the Serbs and risk the safety of NATO aircrews. During his term of service in Bosnia, General Rose acted to limit NATO's response to Serb attacks on three of the UN 'safe areas', on at least one occasion in direct liaison with the Ministry of Defence, his actions by default encouraging the Serbs in the belief that they could continue to defy, with relative impunity, the organisation which General Rose was purportedly representing, i.e. the United Nations. Rose's successor, Lt. General Rupert Smith, who proposed a more confrontational policy in response to Serb offensives, did not receive the same degree of support from the British government and, in late May 1995, was stripped of his authority to request NATO air strikes until after the fall of Srebrenica, by which time Whitehall was no longer able to defend its non-combat position and the myth of Serb military invincibility, which had been used throughout the war to frustrate effective military action, was finally crushed.

The international peace process was another area where Britain exercised considerable control, through two former British foreign secretaries, Lord Carrington and Lord Owen, who consecutively held the chair of the Hague, Brussels and Geneva peace conferences from September 1991 through to June 1995 (David Owen as EC envoy, in conjunction with Cyrus Vance and, later, Thorwald Stoltenberg, representing the UN). The Cutileiro/Carrington Plan (or Lisbon Agreement), a proposal for the cantonisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

based mainly on ethnic considerations, and presented to Bosnia's leaders in February 1992, was often later cited (not least by apologists of the Milosevic and Pale regimes) as the last chance for peace. Such a plan if implemented would, however, have entailed the displacement of huge numbers of civilians, in order to bring about the ethnic cohesion envisaged by Serb (and some Croat) leaders as an acceptable basis for a settlement. Nor was there a clear conception on the part of international proponents of the plan of how it would have worked in practice. Also not taken into account was the fact that the Bosnian Serb leaders, in conjunction with the Milosevic regime in Belgrade, had already created the political and military conditions for a fullscale war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and, particularly in light of the international acceptance of the assault on Vukovar and its aftermath, probably concluded that at that juncture there was more to be gained from war than peace. Despite the stated objective of the various peace plans proposed, to devise a formula which would preserve a multi-ethnic coexistence, each successive plan after the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in fact provided less sovereignty for the recognised Bosnian government, the only side which supported multi-ethnicity. The Vance-Owen plan, while acknowledging the principles of the London Conference, contained no provisions for implementation of its controversial aspects, particularly the withdrawal of Serb troops from 27% of captured territory and the return of refugees. The lack of commitment on the part of the British government to implementing the plan was evident at a Foreign Affairs Committee meeting shortly after the plan was publicly aired, when Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, under close questioning, was forced to admit that implementation was a matter for the parties concerned, 'based on people's perception of self-interest', but would not be imposed. Subsequent peace plans accepted the *de facto* partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into national territories. The Owen/Stoltenberg Plan, which was essentially a Serbian/Croatian creation, was put forward for international consideration by the ICFY co-chairs, Owen and Stoltenberg but, predictably, rejected by the Bosnian government. The Contact

Group plan, formulated after the US brokered Bosniac-Croat Federation, appropriated half of Bosnia's territory to a third of its population. This plan was used as the basis for the Dayton Agreement in late 1995, when the newly-ratified Serb Republic was still effectively (albeit not officially) led by indicted war criminal, Radovan Karadzic.

Until late August 1995, most of the main decision-making was conducted through the UN Security Council, which also controlled the use of force in Bosnia-Herzegovina from mid 1993 through the so-called 'dual key' arrangement between the UN and NATO, effectively neutralising the latter. Of the five Permanent Members of the Council, China throughout the early 1990s maintained its 'neutral' stance adopted after the 1949 Revolution, and Russia, while assuming an increasingly prominent role in international policy during the Bosnian war in endeavouring to retain its world power status, did not during that period act to veto decisions reached within the Council, its essential passivity evident not least at the time of the combined UN/NATO action in Bosnia in September 1995.

The United States, as the only remaining superpower in the aftermath of the Cold War (as well as the main financial contributor to the UN), was perceived by many as the crucial player in determining international policy in the region. There were a number of factors during this time, however, which acted as constrictors on US policy, both in the Bush and Clinton administrations. War broke out in Croatia just months after the Gulf war, and in the declining days of the Soviet empire, at a time when the international emphasis was on preempting any development which might further destabilise the Soviet Union, or act as a precedent in triggering its breakup. Also, George Bush was approaching a general election campaign which he was loath to fight on an international, and possibly unwinnable, ticket, and was content to defer to the European Community which, in the leadup to the Maastricht Treaty, was keen to prove its prowess in resolving a European war. Bill Clinton, who in

opposition had campaigned on a pledge to take tougher action in the Bosnian war, adopted a more pro-active position on assuming the US presidency, developing what became known as a 'lift-and-strike' policy, namely, the removal of the arms embargo against the Bosnian government, accompanied by air strikes on Serb positions. This initiative was significantly compromised, however, following the visit of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to European capitals in early May 1993, starting with Britain where his proposals were rebuffed with disdain by a full complement of senior ministers. The United States subsequently supported a draft UN Security Council resolution to lift the arms embargo from the Bosnian government, which was defeated with six votes in favour and nine abstentions, including that of Britain. The United States also attempted to use NATO air power against the Serb positions, most notably during the Igman crisis in August 1993, and again in the 'safe areas' of Sarajevo, Gorazde and Bihac the following year. It was during the Bihac crisis, however, that the US was again forced to withdraw its support for air strikes. Faced with a new Serb air defence system and the implacable resistance of Britain in particular, to strategic (as opposed to tactical) NATO air strikes, the US was virtually faced with the choice of defending the UN 'safe areas' in Bosnia or preserving the Atlantic Alliance. It opted for the latter but worked simultaneously towards balancing the forces on the ground in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, through a partial relaxation of the arms embargo on the Adriatic, and implicit endorsement of a training scheme for the Croatian and Bosnian armies, under the agency of retired American military officers. This, and the concomitant rapidly diminishing morale amongst VRS forces, were not inconsiderable factors in persuading Serb leaders to acquiesce in a negotiated political settlement at Dayton. Critics of US policy during the Bosnian war often did not take full account of this, or of the major US diplomatic contribution to ending the war in Central Bosnia.

France, the other European 'P5' member on the UN Security Council, is often perceived, especially within the Bosnian Federation, as having led international policy on the war, together with Britain. To a large extent, as has been demonstrated, this was the case. France, like Britain, was a major contributor to UNPROFOR, its contribution (and casualty toll) until 1995 exceeding that of Britain, which did not have troops deployed in any of the 'safe areas' until 1994. France also argued strenuously to maintain the UN arms embargo over all the Yugoslav successor states. The pro-Serb culture within British army circles, as well as amongst academic experts, was also evident in France which had traditionally an even stronger reputation for Serbophilia than the UK. On the other hand, the French government (like that of the United States) had to contend with a relatively vocal opposition throughout the war, which was not confined to party politics but extended to the intelligentsia and NGOs working in the area. Most significantly, however, France's objectives at the time were somewhat different from those of Britain, one of its main concerns being to promote the concept of European defence, to build a strong European army within the WEU and achieve a greater measure of independence from the United States, whilst maintaining its ambivalent role within NATO. France, therefore, sought involvement at the highest level in the leadership of European unity in the Balkan war, including full participation in 'peacekeeping' operations on the ground. It was also concerned to associate itself with the dominant Yugoslav partner, Serbia, as a useful ally in any postwar European configuration, and to counteract German hegemony in the Balkans. For, whilst in accord with Germany on the necessity to centralise power structures within the EC/EU, France had military ambitions beyond those of Germany, which was confined by constitutional restrictions imposed after World War II. Consequently, during the Bosnian war in particular, France was to play something of a 'balancing' role, mostly supporting the UK within the UN Security Council but seeking, where opportune, to assume a dominant position within the European decision-making framework. For these and other reasons, France's Balkans policy during

the early 1990s was less consistent than that of Britain. Differences were evident on the issue of imposing the UN air exclusion zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina which France pressed for in late 1992. France also initiated the NATO ultimatum threatening air strikes on Serb positions, in February 1994. In proposing three options for UN troop deployment to the 'safe areas', the French representative supported the additional deployment of up to 12,500 troops, as opposed to the minimalist, symbolic level of deployment proposed by Britain. The relative flexibility of French policy, vis-à-vis that of Britain, was most evident, however, when Jacques Chirac took over the French presidency from Francois Mitterrand in May 1995, reversing within days the appeasement policy of his predecessor. The ease and speed with which France's Balkans policy shifted to a more confrontational stance suggested, *inter alia*, a lack of the institutional entrenchment which had marked Britain's Balkans policy throughout the war.

In tracing the British role, particular attention has been paid in this study to government ministers' presentation of the issue in the House of Commons and through evidence at parliamentary Select Committees. Several factors became apparent. Firstly, despite Britain's leading role in international policy in the Balkans, as one of the main troop and aid contributors, the opportunities for informed parliamentary debate on the issue were few, as pointed out by a number of backbenchers from across the political spectrum with differing views of the war. British ministers also misled the House of Commons on a number of occasions in relation to crucial aspects of the international debate and developments on the ground claiming falsely, for instance, that all expert advice from the military and diplomatic corps was against intervention in Bosnia, a claim refuted by senior NATO officials, and exposed by backbench MPs. Ministers also perpetrated the myth that it would take several hundred thousand troops to defeat the Serbs. The US 'lift-and-strike' policy, on the other hand, was never seriously considered, and attempts to raise the subject in the House of Commons were routinely quashed by

ministers. The Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, the prime mover behind all the turmoil in the region, was portrayed as essential to the peace process, while the continuing role of Serbia in supporting, both militarily and financially, the VRS forces perpetrating the majority of the war crimes in Bosnia, was mostly overlooked, and even denied. British ministers also claimed repeatedly that the Bosnian war was a civil conflict. This had a manifold purpose and effect. It suggested a symmetry of guilt, ignored the origins of the war and the manner in which it was conducted on the ground and, at the same time, insinuated that the international community had less reason (and right) to intervene in the war, other than in a humanitarian and mediating capacity. There was also the question of terminology. Confusion arose over the loose, and possibly expedient, terms used to describe the UNPROFOR mission. The term 'peacekeeping', in reference to the role of the UN troops, was especially misleading since, despite assertions by British ministers and some army officers to the contrary, there was no peace to keep. It also conflicted with the original declared UNPROFOR role, namely, to escort UN aid. As it soon became evident that aid was often not reaching the isolated areas most at risk, was consistently below the UN estimated required monthly target, and was frequently used to feed the armies, particularly the VRS which manned most of the checkpoints, it became clear that either UNPROFOR should withdraw in the acknowledgement that the mandate was unachievable, or its mandate should be changed. In fact, neither occurred, the troops instead acquiring the nebulous, and inaccurate, designation of 'peacekeepers', which also suggested that the UN troops were performing a more vital role than was often the case.

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None of the world powers or institutions emerged well from their respective roles in attempting to resolve the conflict in Yugoslavia and its successor states between 1991 and 1995. Through the use of empirical data, and with emphasis on the importance of the chronological order of events, this study concludes, however, that Britain distinguished itself from its major Western allies in its consistent endorsement of policies which froze, and even exacerbated, the imbalance of weaponry on the ground, leaving the Serbs with overwhelming military dominance, and effectively depriving Bosnia-Herzegovina of its right to self defence under the UN Charter. It helped to institute, and largely dominated, an international peace process geared to continuing negotiations with the architects of genocidal policies, while implicitly equating victims and perpetrators in a genocidal war. British ministers misled parliament on the nature of the war, the military invincibility of the Serbs, and on advice received from NATO officials and others which did not accord with the British position. Most crucially, Britain consistently obstructed initiatives by other states and institutions to intervene militarily at various points of the war from the summer of 1991 which, as official studies of international responsibility in the conflict have all concluded, was a major factor in prolonging the war and making possible the mass slaughter at Srebrenica, the event which, ironically, opened the way for the coordinated military action which finally brought the war to an end.

In sight of the overwhelming evidence, it can be safely concluded that British foreign policy under the Major government was intellectually unsustainable, for it contained an overwhelming paradox between the policy aims, the means and the results, and morally corrupt in all too often distorting the issue of culpability. Pinning the British colours to the ability of the Belgrade regime to achieve or maintain Yugoslav unity not only caused the policy to fail but, in the process, wrought a great deal of turmoil and unnecessary destruction of life and property, and added to the instability in South Eastern Europe which, for a time, threatened to expand beyond the borders of the former SFRJ.



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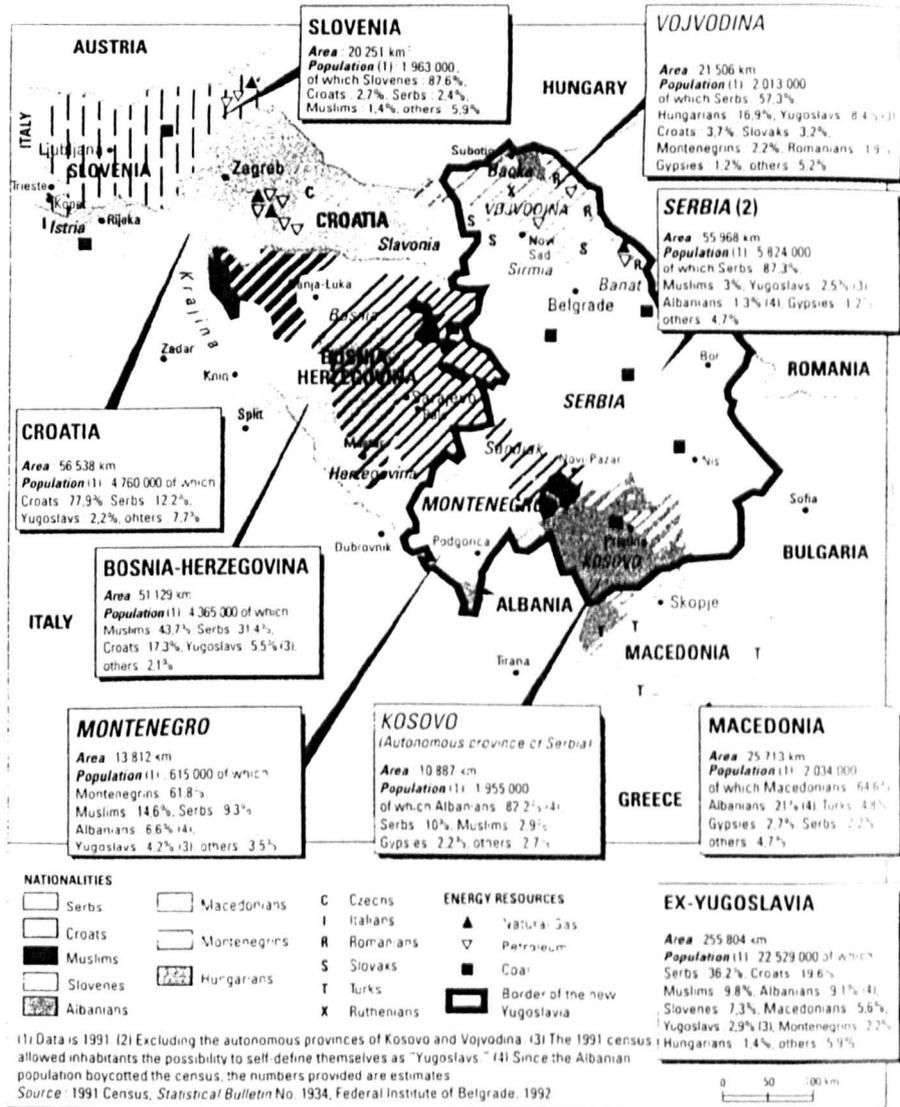
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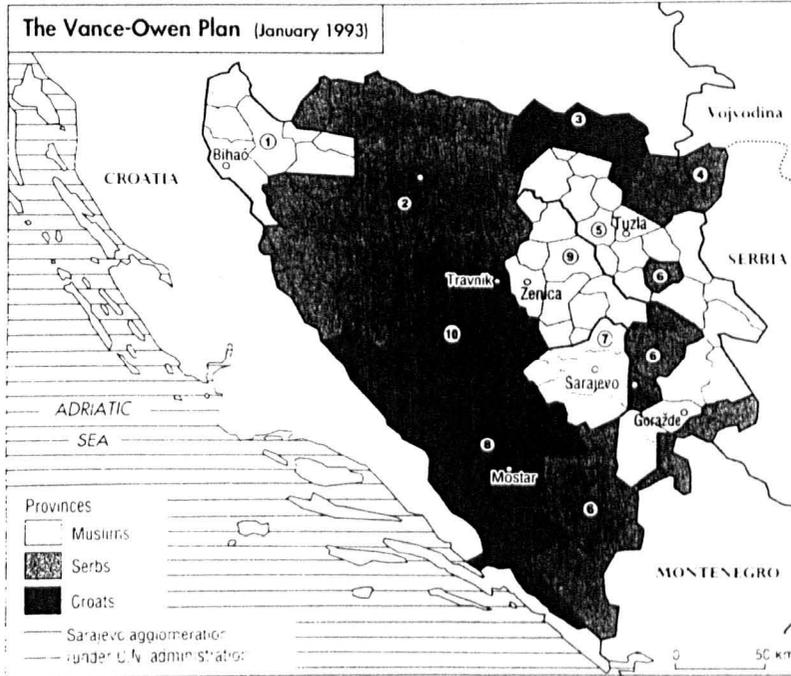
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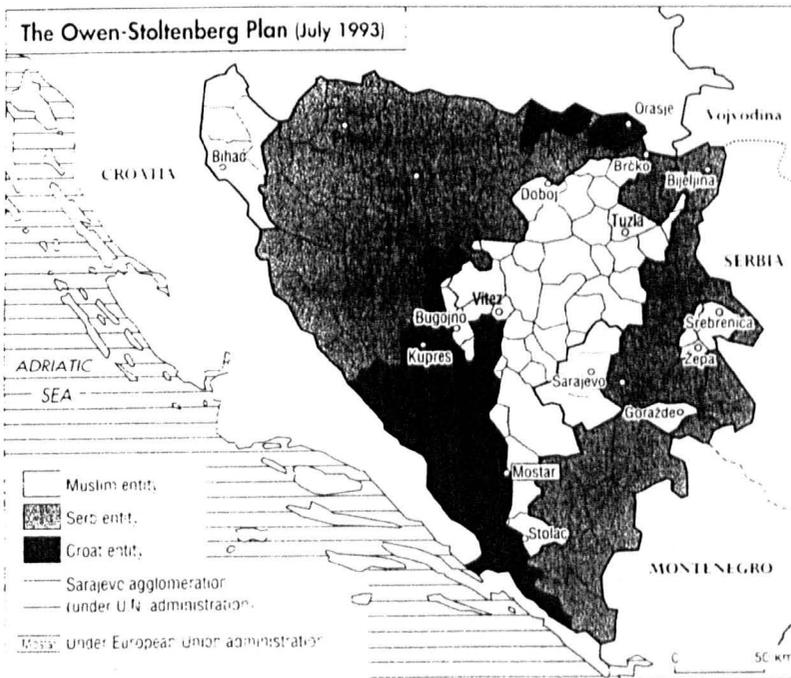
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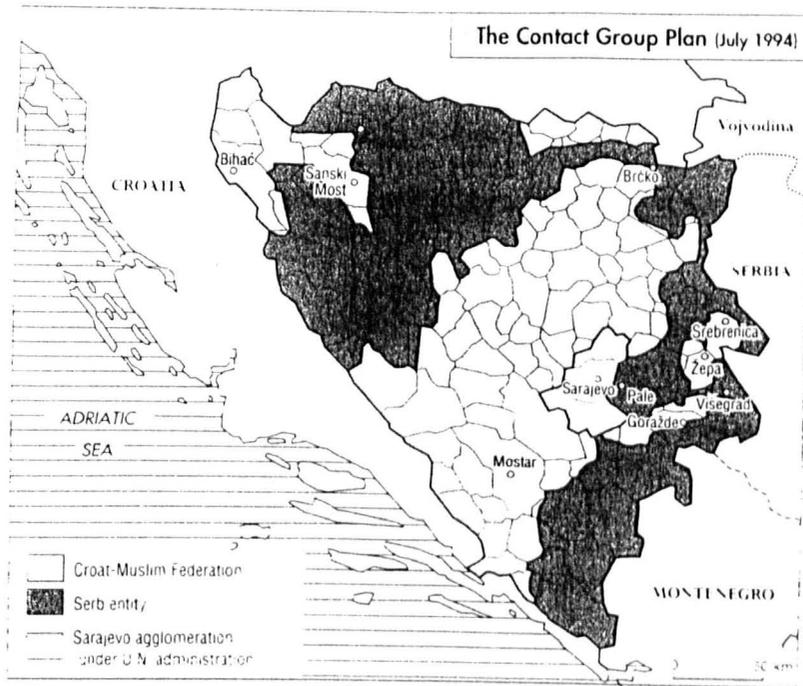




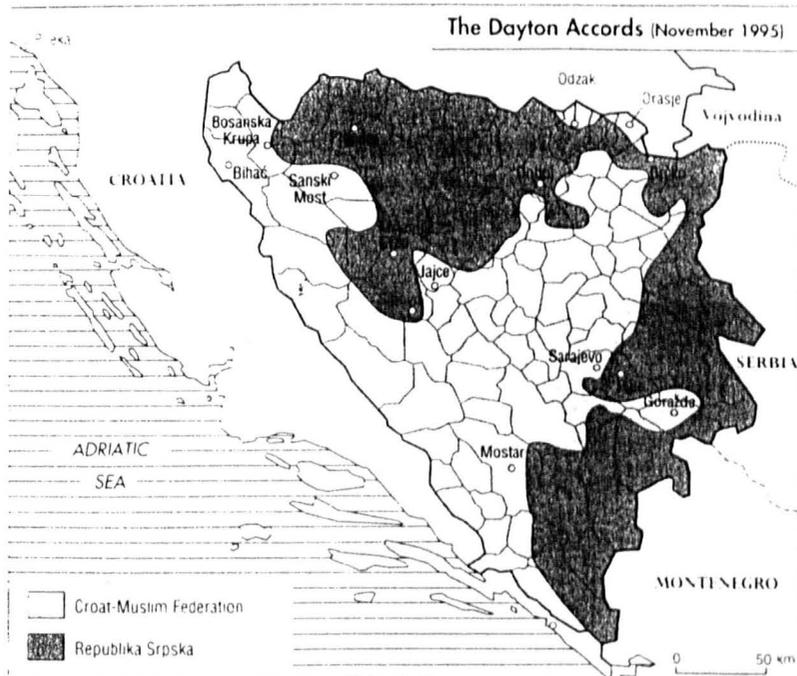
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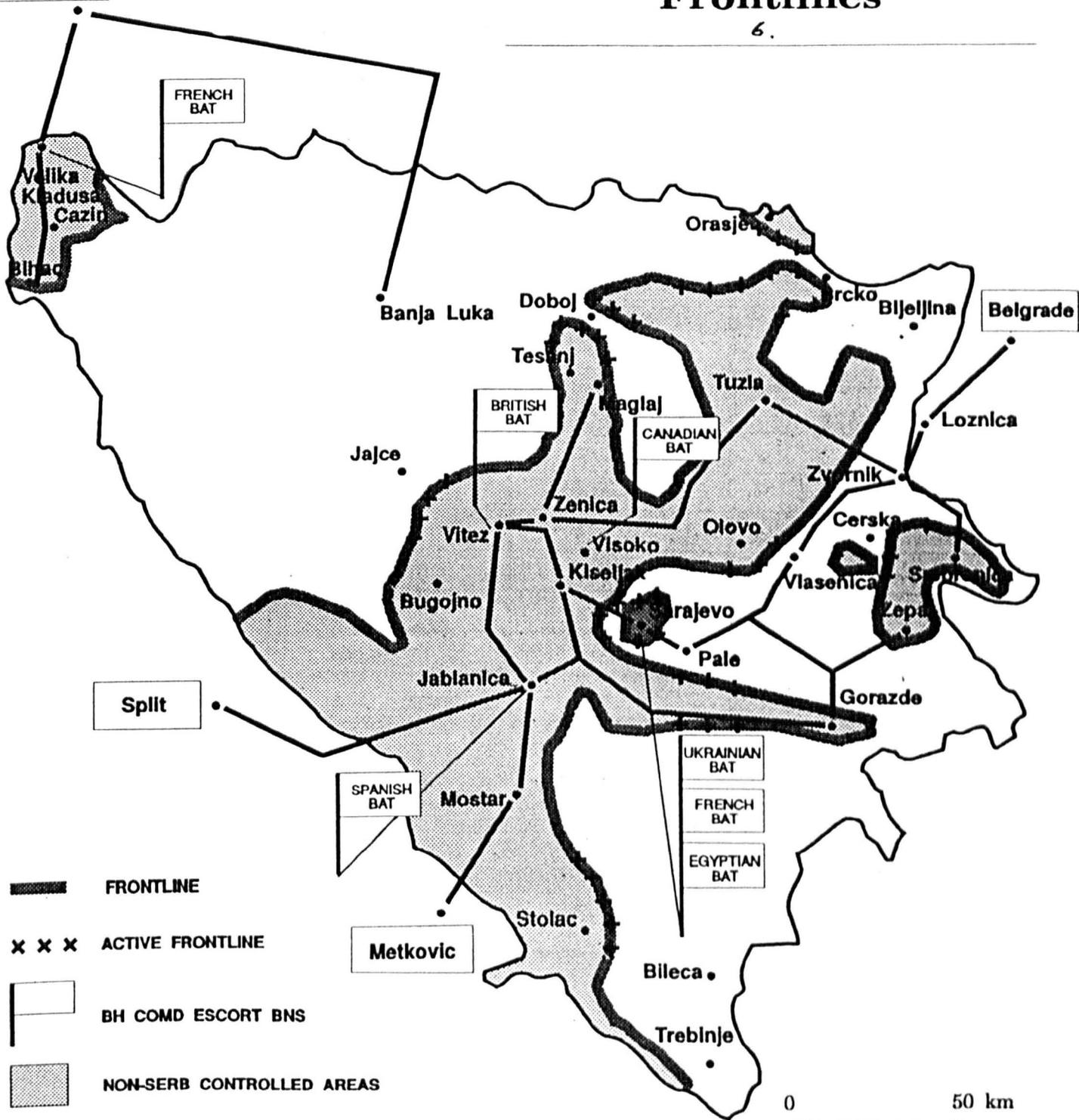


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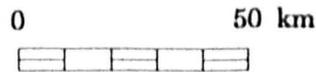
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Frontlines

6.



-  FRONTLINE
-  ACTIVE FRONTLINE
-  BH COMD ESCORT BNS
-  NON-SERB CONTROLLED AREAS
-  BOSNIAN SERB CONTROLLED AREA
-  SARAJEVO AREA
-  MAIN UNHCR CONVOY ROUTES



14 March 1993

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FRONTLINES

7.



1 February 1994

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This map is not to be taken as necessarily representing the views of the UN on boundaries or political status.



GLOSSARY

ABiH	<i>Armija Bosne i Hercegovine</i> [Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina]
BSA	Bosnian Serb Army
CFSP	Common [EU] Foreign and Security Policy
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EC	European Community
ECMM	European Community Monitoring Mission
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Committee
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
HDZ	<i>Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica</i> [Croatian Democratic Union Community]
HV	<i>Hrvatska Vojska</i> [Croatian Army]
HVO	<i>Hrvatsko Vijeće Odbrane</i> [Croatian Defence Council]
ICFY	International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia
JAP	Joint Action Programme
JNA	<i>Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija</i> [Yugoslav People's Army]
MBO	Muslim Bosniac Party
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Inc.
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NFZ	No-Fly Zone
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RS	<i>Republika Srpska</i>
RSK	<i>Republika Srpska Krajina</i>

RRF	Rapid Reaction Force
RTS	<i>Radio Televizija Srbije</i> (Serbian Radio and Television)
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAO	<i>Srpske Autonomne Oblasti</i> [Serbian Autonomous Regions]
SAS	Special Air Service
SDA	<i>Stranka Demokratske Akcije</i> [Party of Democratic Action]
SDS	<i>Srpska Demokratska Stranka</i> [Serbian Democratic Party]
SFRJ	<i>Socijalistička federalna republika Jugoslavije</i> [Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia]
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SPS	<i>Socijalistička Partija Srbije</i> [Serbian Socialist Party]
SRSG	Special Representative to the UN Secretary General
TO	<i>Teritorijalna Odbrana</i> [Territorial Defence Force]
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VJ	<i>Vojska Jugoslavije</i> [Army of Yugoslavia]
VOPP	Vance-Owen Peace Plan
VRS	<i>Vojska Republike Srpske</i> [Bosnian Serb Army]
WEU	Western European Union

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