

Political and Diplomatic Efforts by the Republic of Croatia and the International Community in Order to Achieve the Peaceful Reintegration of Occupied Areas and Croatia's Full Sovereignty on its Complete State Territory

What was it in the political and diplomatic arena that preceded the military/police action and what were the roles of the participants cast long before the tragic claim became unavoidable?

In this chronological review of the most important diplomatic actions taken by the UN, ICFY⁶⁹, EU, the Republic of Croatia, FR Yugoslavia and the authorities of the so-called "RSK", the moves that all the most important actors have taken are visible:

- the Republic of Croatia's effort through peaceful means, negotiations, to reach the goals marked in UN Resolutions
- the actions of RSK leaders to, by any means, obstruct the peace process and try to achieve their parastatehood, after which they would annex it to other Serbian states (that attitude was advocated by terrorist threats and their actions – the expulsion and killing of the remaining non-Serb population)
- the UN and world power reluctance to call a "spade a spade" – to name the aggressor, the terrorism, the occupation and the crime⁷⁰.

Looking into official documents, one witness notes the painstaking move made from one conference to another and the argument's over buildings that were always disputed. We see the Serb headstrong positions and Milošević's tactics. We discover the international community/the UN, some states, and UNPROFOR's sympathy for the victors, the Serbs⁷¹ and antipathy for the losers. Losers being those who wanted peace to be reached and those who would achieve a settlement among two losing sides (the Muslims and the Croats)⁷².

The UN at first was reluctant to enter into the Yugoslav crisis and only after all sides involved agreed did they accept (UN



Picture 5: UNPA - United Nation's Protected Areas and disposition of UNPROFOR
Davor Domazet-Lošo "Hrvatska i Veliko Ratište"

Security Council Resolution 724 on December 14th 1991) "Vance Peace Plan". Resolution⁷³ 727 welcomes the Croatian ceasefire agreement signed in Sarajevo on January 2nd 1992 and implemented on January 3rd. It was as soon as the February 21st 743 Resolution⁷⁴ that UNPROFOR was formally established. The new Resolution stated when its deployment was set to commence. 743 Resolution⁷⁵ was very important for the Republic of Croatia because of its recommendation to the General UN Assembly for Croatia to become a full member of the UN, which consequently occurred on May 22nd 1992. UN Security Council 762 Resolution⁷⁶ agrees upon the "Pink Zones"⁷⁷ concept as a temporary solution until Croatia's control over that territory was re-established. The Croatian government's repeated demands to prevent the military and logistical help the "RSK" received over the borders of the Republic of Croatia – the UNPROFOR control over international borders was established by the 769 Resolution⁷⁸. That however did not prevent Serbs continuing to use those bor-

der crossings, so repeated incidents among UN and Serb military and civilian authorities occurred.

The Krajina Serbs controlling the Peruča dam (that supplied most areas of southern Croatia with electrical power) would from time to time switch off the power supply, or threaten to blow up the dam, opening the scouring tunnel and endangering the lives of thousands of people living downstream. In order to prevent such a humanitarian catastrophe, the UN instituted 779 Resolution⁷⁹ wherein the Peruča dam was secured by UN forces. Co-presiding Cyrus Vance and David Owen, two key figures representing the UN and the contact group, had on the 19th and 20th of November 1992 visited four UNPA zones in Croatia. It became clear to them that the Vance Peace Plan was not implemented, and they tried to find out what could be done on the ground. Owen, in his memories "Balkan Odyssey" writes: "We visited the Maslenica Bridge, destroyed in the war, and which should be opened again so that Croatian transport and tourist vehicles, and businesses could drive down the highway towards the Dalmatian coast. We climbed the crest of the Peruča dam carefully, because it was considered that a large quantity of explosives was planted in the power station, which if Serbs were to activate would destroy the dam and flood the area. Both those questions were discussed thoroughly in Belgrade, Zagreb and Geneva, so it was useful to see how it looked on the field⁸⁰". They visited Knin and witnessed the headstrong, firm view of the Krajina Serbs. "In Knin we had a dreadful meeting with Krajina's Serbs, who refused to accept anything but secession and who pretended they were members of an independent government with their own foreign minister. I said repeatedly, in order to make them understand, that we were in Croatia, which the UN with its semantics tried to avoid?! My definition provoked a bombastic speech about us being in an independent Serb republic."⁸¹ At the same time, the JNA withdrew from Prevlaka, but since the FR Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) claimed that area as their own, the UN Security Council decided to form a "buffer zone" there, under the supervision of UN military observers. And then, to the amazement of many, on January 22nd 1993 the Croatian military/police Maslenica action occurred in which the Maslenica gorge, Rovanijska, Jasenice, Maslenica, Novigrad, Zemunik airfield and some strategic Velebit Mountain peaks were liberated. The international community's fear that a simmering conflict in Croatia could break into a larger scale war had grown. Three days after the Maslenica action started, the UN Security Council reacted with its 802 Resolution⁸², asking for the immediate cease of the military activities and the return of the Croatian Army to the pre-Maslenica action lines. The UN Secretary General report to the UN Security Council – annexed to the 743 Resolution (1992)⁸³ points out:

“The situation became more serious. After the Croatian Maslenica operation began, Serbs have stolen heavy weapons, armed themselves and mobilized the Serb population; a considerably great number of reinforcement troops have come from all parts of the former Yugoslavia...” David Owen soon realized why Croatia had decided to undertake such a military action, in order to solve the problem of its communication between the north and south of the country. *“The Croatian Government, understandably from the very start, tried to avoid the repetition of Cyprus, where a UN presence de facto cemented the island’s division, and therefore a ceasefire was never achieved... The Croatian Serbs were the factor of consolidation in disguise and the Croatian government the factor of destabilization”*⁸⁴. But the course of events did not stop there. After repeated Serb threats they would blow up the Peruća Dam, on January 27th 1993, the Croatian Army liberated it in a swift action. The Serbs had activated the dynamite in the power station, but fortunately they did not destroy the Dam completely. So the Dam withstood the damage and the accumulation lake’s water did not flood into the valley below. After that events at the Dam, the military and political situation became more tense again. Krajina Serbs demanded the Croatian liberated areas in Ravni Kotari be returned to them, while Croatians insisted on the implementation of UN Resolutions and the “Pink Zones” be returned under Croatian sovereignty. The conditions in the occupied territories gave them that claim, because the Serbs had through ethnic cleansing changed the ethnic makeup in the occupied parts of Croatia. They would not allow the return of Croatian refugees and instead settled these areas with Serbs coming from all parts of the former Yugoslavia. Describing that and the UN role in the peace plan implementation, Owen objectively and critically said: *“The great influx of Serb refugees had brought about the violence among Serbs themselves. Their gangs engaged in ransoms and extortions, all of that happened right under the UNPROFOR CIVPOL noses...whose role as they had told us, was a passive one, watching and reporting on local police and local authorities activities, and nourishing good relations with the population as a whole. Considering the conditions prevailing in Croatia at the time, especially after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had begun...it was impossible to see how the UN could become anything else but a subject of scorn and a laughing matter in Croatia. The UN was not liked nor appreciated by anybody.”*⁸⁵

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina worsened, so Resolution 807⁸⁶ had to be voted on, by which the UN Security Council “Declares decisiveness in securing the unimpeded activities of UNPROFOR in the Republic of Croatia and other republics.” The great number of crimes happened in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and victims of the aggression demand-

ed the court be formed in order to punish war crimes perpetrators and human rights violators. Croatia was one of the states asking for the ICTY to be established. The UN Security Council's Resolution 808 established the ICTY – or "The International Tribunal for criminal prosecution of those persons responsible of serious international humanitarian laws violations committed since 1991 on the former Yugoslavia territories." A very important Resolution 815, confirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia and that the so-called "RSK" violated it and did not take it into account. "The UN confirms its decision to ensure that the sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia, territorial integrity and other republics in which UNPROFOR is deployed... the future status of UN (UNPA zones) should be decided on and those zones are the constitutive part of the Republic of Croatia's territory." Croatia conditioned UNPROFOR's mandate extension, asking for more efficient pressure on rebel Serbs to accept those principals which had been agreed upon and written in official UN documents. That opinion is echoed by the UN Secretary General in his report to the UN Security Council, pending UN Security Council Resolution 815 (1993) in which the mandate of UNPROFOR in the Republic of Croatia was decided upon.

"Serbs decline to accept the reality – the Republic of Croatia's sovereignty and negotiations about their (minority) question status; they question the ambiguous nature of UNPROFOR's future role, the extension of its mandate, the modality of its mandate and the purpose of it..."

On the mandate's extension, the UN Secretary General further elaborated in the 2nd point of that report: *"The future of UNPROFOR in the Republic of Croatia if both factors are questioned – if both sides fail, especially the Serb side's inability to cooperate in the political process, would make the solution of all the disputed matters possible. Despite the co-ordinator's⁸⁷ and UNPROFOR's efforts, there is no visible progress. The UNPROFOR role is to prevent rising tension and clashes between the Serb side and the Croatian authority's side. The end of the mandate could result in all out war in the region and prevent humanitarian aid from being delivered. The UN in the Republic of Croatia helps the situation development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, separates the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The UN Security Council therefore declines the option to withdraw from the Republic of Croatia and leaves UNPROFOR in the Republic of Croatia. That will not be satisfactory to the Republic of Croatia but according to the UN Secretary General's assessment: the goals which the Croatian government imposes are impossible to reach without full UNPA and "Pink Zone" local Serb co-operation. We will therefore ask the Republic of Croatia for a three-month extension of the mandate. UNPROFOR has undertaken the difficult job*

and decisively executed it. Five-hundred UN members were wounded, 46 of them mortally, among that number 246 wounded and 25 killed in the Republic of Croatia.”

Because of the conflicting interests of world powers, the UN lacked the political will or strength to firmly engage in Croatian problem solving. In David Owen’s own words: “The UN was not able to return (Croatian) refugees home, while at the same time Serb paramilitaries have not demobilized their troops and the UN lacked the firmness to confiscate their arms by force. The stalemate position continued for the following two and a half years...”⁸⁸ Even the UN Security Council chairman at the time was worried with the situation on the battleground development, in that “all-around, integrated battleground” and delivered remarks on April 21st 1993 called the “Bosnia and Herzegovina situation”. Those remarks denounce the new wave of violence, ask for a ceasefire and co-operation with UNPROFOR and the co-president of the International Committee for the Former Yugoslavia, Lord Owen. David Owen and General Lars Wahlgren, new commanding officer of UNPROFOR, talked on April 25th regarding the ways in which to realize the suggestions of the Security Council Chairman, and how to materialize “Vance-Owen’s Peace Proposal.” In his book, Owen describes Wahlgren as a “sensible and calm Swede with great UN experience”⁸⁹. But Wahlgren would also be unable to break Serb determination, outwit Milošević’s cunning tactics, Croatian diplomatic skills, and great powers’ opposing political interests. Soon he would resign and be replaced by General Jean Cot.

Resolution 827⁹⁰ established the ICTY, marking the foundation for an inquiry and consecutive punishment of those individuals who committed war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. On June 3rd 1993, Croatia’s President Tuđman sent a letter which was forwarded to the UN Security Council Secretary General. The Croatian President spoke of “the continued Serb aggression on the Republic of Croatia, now a member of the UN, about the shelling of towns and cities, the mistreatment of the non-Serb population, the participation of FR Yugoslavia citizens in the aggression on the Republic of Croatia, of the breaking down of negotiations between legitimate Croat authorities and Serb “Krajina” representatives-caused by the later, and about the referendum preparations that would annex “RSK” with the other Serbian territorial gains. Serbs refused to implement all UN Resolutions and intended to secede the part of sovereign Croatian territory that is completely unacceptable for the Republic of Croatia – according to all resolutions. UNPA’s are the Republic of Croatia’s integral parts. The dramatic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina worsens. The Republic of Croatia asks UNPROFOR to be engaged on the internationally recognized borders between Croatia and Bosnia and

Herzegovina and between Croatia and FR Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The Republic of Croatia should not be a hostage in the Bosnia and Herzegovina situation. The Republic of Croatia will accept the UN mandate extension if the methods of applying Vance-Owen plan are clearly drawn."

Croatia continued with its diplomatic efforts. On June 18th 1993 Croatia's Foreign Minister Mate Granić in a letter to the UN Security Council Secretary General wrote: *"The Republic of Croatia advocates the separation of the UNPROFOR mandate into three separate mandates – this apart from the mandate's extension (on peace forces for the Republic of Croatia, for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for Macedonia) because they are three separate states, not engaged in war with one another. They do not form any political or any other union – therefore cannot be defined as a unique territory of operations. The previous mandate of the UN has ceased being opposite to the UN member states sovereignty. The existing problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina who is yet to define its states' constitution is non-existent in Croatia; here the effective solution for the UNPA zones should be found."* The co-president of the international conference for the former Yugoslavia tried to negotiate between the opposing sides in both the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and tried to enforce a peaceful conflict solution."

On June 28th 1993 the Geneva conference called upon leaders Milošević, Tuđman, Bulatović, Karadžić and Boban to take part. President Tuđman again wrote to the UN Security Council Secretary General. In his letter dated June 25th 1993 he tried to make the mandate extension politically useful and conceded a peaceful solution was possible and agreed on further negotiations with the Serb side. He also warned that the UN was ineffective and pointed out the consequences of such a mandate: *"...I propose a month-long extension of the mandate, during which time a willingness of Serb representatives to reach an agreement with Croatian authorities should be tested. Then another three month-long mandate and finally the consequent separation of mandates would be possible. The situation is extremely difficult, some of the Croatian territory is "de facto" separated from mainland Croatia, communications are impeded, the economic situation is difficult... Serb attacks on Croatian cities continue daily, in spite the signed ceasefire agreement and UNPROFOR's presence..."*

On June 30th, the Republic of Croatia's UN Mission Ambassador, Mario Nobile sent a letter to the UN Secretary General in which he writes: *"...I underline the proposal of UNPROFOR's separate mandate, propose its new name (UNCRO), the civil and military section should be separated and the head of the civilian affairs in the civilian sector should be appointed."*

Resolution 847⁹¹, voted on the same day, deals with the extension of the UNPROFOR mandate until September 30th of the same year. The Resolution "...once again confirms the territorial integrity and the Republic of Croatia's sovereignty, and takes into account the Croatian government's position on the separate UNPROFOR mandate in the sovereign Republic of Croatia's areas." The Secretary General would think it over and make his decision at a later date. The Secretary General's report to the UN Security Council pending the second paragraph of 847 UN SC Resolution (1993): "...in 847 UN Resolution dated on June 30th 1993, the three-month extension of the UN mandate has been decided upon. UN SC Secretary General has a month to monitor the peace plan and all the Resolution's implementation, thus accepting the Croatian demand." The presidential Security Council statement endorsed the re-opening of the Maslenica Bridge for civilian transport. The Republic of Croatia simply wanted to open the bridge and Zemunik airfield. Without the agreement and UNPROFOR's participation in it, the situation on the ground would worsen and prevent confidence building. The UN Security Council demands that Croatia refrain from such action. According to the Erdut Agreement (on June 15th/16th 1993) the Croatian Army and police would have withdrawn their troops from the Maslenica area by June 31st, placing it under complete UNPROFOR supervision. In order to achieve the Erdut Agreement's implementation, UNPROFOR brought 800 troops into the vicinity of the area Croats were to withdraw from. Those Croat forces did not allow for complete UN deployment in this area. On August 2nd Serb shelling sank one of the Maslenica pontoon bridges. One of the co-presidents was still of the opinion there was a possibility to continue with negotiations. He asked both sides to attend the Geneva conference, during which the elements of the original Erdut treaty would be discussed. After both parties accepted the invitation, the talks began. The Security Council Secretary General again expressed his opinion on the situation: "The questions that should be solved in Croatia have not yet been solved. Everything now depends on the present efforts to implement UN Resolutions and UN Security Council recommendations. Peace could only be achieved through goodwill and negotiations. I am seriously considering the Croatian proposal about the mandate separation. A decision has not yet been made. The proposal needs further consideration. Co-presidents under the Secretary General's instruction, also increased their pressure on all sides. On June 31st they convened an International Conference on the former Yugoslavia in Geneva. Soon small steps to approach a peace solution were made, but it was unclear whether they were due to Serb side tactics or to the Croatian gov-

ernment and president's political moves, made in order to prepare new diplomatic, political and military manoeuvring.

On July 15th and 16th 1993 the agreement regarding the Croatian forces withdrawal from areas liberated in the Maslenica operation were drafted. In Geneva the following day, July 17th, Milošević and Tuđman met. On July 23rd an addition to the July 15th/16th agreement was signed. In his letter to the Security Council presidency (dated August 29th – as a UN SC document) Boutros Boutros Ghali, for the first time mentioned war crimes in Croatia and wrote: *"...The expert commission tries in their mandate's frame to make inquiry and to analyze information about grave Geneva convention violations, and other violations of human rights committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In order to discover and document the existence of mass graves in the UNPA zones...it is of the utmost importance the research (excavation) at the place called Ovčara, near Vukovar in UN Sector West be done."* One conference is followed by another. The London conference held on August 26th and 27th 1993 co-presided by the SC secretary general, prime minister of Great Britain, president of the EU ministry council and the leaders of the warring sides. From August 27th to August 30th the same conference continued, this time in Geneva. It feverishly tried to find a solution for achieving peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

But the UN Mission to Croatia's attaché letter again warned of SR Yugoslavia and RS military aid being given to the so-called RSK. *"The information on Serbian troops from Serbia proper and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina deployment in the Republic of Croatia... the manpower and military armament increase in the UNPA and "Pink Zones"... about 600 armed men (a battalion) from the "2nd Krajiški Corps of the Republika Srpska Army" had in the middle of July arrived from the Bosnia and Herzegovina territory to the area of Benkovac. Recently, another battalion joined them. At the same time a group of volunteers from Serbia, about 13 to 15,000 strong, arrived to northern Dalmatia and immediately engaged in fighting. One hundred and fifty to 200 officers and lower-rank JNA officers have been assigned duties in the so-called 15th Lika corps and in the 7th Knin corps."⁹² One battalion of the Republika Srpska's Army is deployed opposite of the Cazin krajina, one RS Army brigade is stationed in Western Slavonia, six to seven thousand men with artillery and an armoured battalion (40 tanks) from Serbia have infiltrated the UNPA and a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina is under Serb control. The militarization is stepped up in sectors North and South, which is a sign of a possible military action planned in Serbia's political and military centres. The serious nature of the situation*

escalates as civilians are being evacuated in some parts of the Republic of Croatia occupied by Serbs."

But Serbs from the so-called RSK persist in denying Croatia its sovereignty and territorial integrity. They continue their terrorist shelling of Croatian cities along the coast. On August 23rd 1993 the ancient city of Zadar's surrounding area (the bridge and the airfield) were shelled. On August 24th Zadar's vicinity was bombed. On August 25th eastern Slavonia, Zadar, Maslenica and Pakrac suffer the same fate. On August 26th and 27th the same cities were under attack again. The Croatian side in communicating with the UN Security Council and continues to warn them: *"...the actions mentioned show the unwillingness of local Serb authorities to solve problems through peace talks, and they pose a direct threat to the Republic of Croatia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Republic of Croatia asks for the international community's severe condemnation. It becomes obvious that the UN and UNPROFOR should take stronger and more decisive measures to implement UN Security Council Resolutions on the Republic of Croatia's territory."* But the UN and its Secretary General were more preoccupied with the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Secretary General wrote a letter to the Security Council presidency on September 1st 1993 the co-presidents International conference for the former Yugoslavia steering committee's report held from August 30th until September 1st in Geneva, pending the interrupted conference of August 20th: *"...we have taken into consideration the Peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina."* It is obvious that this consideration did not bring about any results. New talks and conferences followed in London, Vienna, Geneva and the secret negotiations in Betostolen near Oslo in Norway. Then on September 8th a horrific Serbian crime occurred in the village of Kusonje. The Croatian Prime Minister Nikica Valentić reported the details in his letter to the UN Security Council Secretary General. The letter of September 8th, September 10th 1993 states: *"... my government and I would like to draw your attention to the crime which was committed today in the village of Kusonje near Pakrac. There was an explosion of a planted device at a memorial day ceremony held for 18 Croatian policemen that had gone missing two years ago. Three persons were killed, eight were wounded, among them an UNPROFOR Argentinean battalion member. UNPROFOR should be held responsible for this terrorist act, for not preventing the attacks done in the UNPA zones under their protection. Therefore the Croatian government warns, if UNPROFOR continue in its current ineffective manner, our government will find the legal means to prevent such terrorist acts. This latest event has stretched our patience to the limit. Let the Serb paramilitary troops, UNPA zones, UN forces, as well as the international community know – the Republic of*

Croatia has been brought to the very brink of its patience and dignity. We address you and ask from you to do everything in your power to prevent such criminal acts from happening again.” The terrorist act followed a long series of shelling and diversions and the Croatian government and public opinion had clearly lost their patience. The President and the government concluded that diplomatic means were useless in bringing security to Croatia’s citizens – they did not reintegrate the occupied territories, and were useless in achieving peace with local Serb authorities.



Picture 6: General view of the Medak Pocket operational area Gospić - Medak - Velebit mountain

During the early morning of September 9th, at 6:05 am, the limited military and police operation in the Medak Pocket started, and was to be finished on the same day at 13:00 hours. The UN started reporting the shelling along both sides of the frontline that morning. General Cot tried mediating a ceasefire at 11:00 hours and at exactly the same time, (according to a UN report), the Croatian Army started an offensive south of the city of Gospić and had taken the villages of Čitluk and Donje Selo. The next day, on September 10th, the Croatian Army and special police fortified their positions and repelled the Serb counteroffensive. The Serbs

intensified their bombardment of civilian targets in the entire Republic of Croatia. Co-president of the IC for the former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg, speaking to President Tuđman proposed the Croatian Army withdraw. The UN reported that the fighting had continued. Tuđman replied that Croatia would accept a ceasefire but not a withdrawal until a comprehensive ceasefire plan was agreed upon. UNPROFOR extended Tuđman's message to the Serb side. Cot sent his own emissaries to both sides, but Croatia's Bobetko refused to meet General Cot's emissary, and Serb General Novaković, Commanding Officer of the "Serbian Krajina" Army threatened to attack targets indiscriminately in all of Croatia if the Croatian Army did not withdraw. UNPROFOR reported that the Croatian Army attacked Medak and the area south of Čitluk. The Croatian recapture of Njegovan was confirmed, and Serb refugees marched towards the town of Gračac. At 19:40, the town of Sisak was shelled and Croatian planes bombed Serb rocket launching positions. UNPROFOR mediated with both sides while the situation worsened. The conflict had spread to sectors North and South, to the "Pink Zones" and to the surrounding areas. These were the fiercest battles waged since the Croatian Army's January 22nd Maslenica offensive

September 11th – the intensity of the battles increased – artillery exchanges followed in Baljak, Medak, Gospić, Mali Alan and Obrovac.

September 12th – The Republic of Croatia at President Tuđman's order unilaterally proclaimed a ceasefire, starting at 12:00 hours. The Republic of Croatia demanded the UN should implement its own Resolutions. In the evening of that same day, UNPROFOR's spokeswoman Shannon Boyd issued a press release: "The UN is trying to achieve a ceasefire and Croatian Army withdrawal." Following a meeting with General Bobetko, General Cot said he would report to the UN Secretary General tomorrow (September 13th) about the situation. The Serb side declined to negotiate while the Croatian Army offensive actions were in the full swing.

September 13th – a verbal ceasefire agreement is reached.

September 14th – In a personal statement, the UN Secretary General demands the Croatian Army withdraw to the September 9th position.

September 15th – the ceasefire agreement was signed by Generals Novaković and Stipetić.

September 16th – at 12:00 hours the beginning of the agreements implementation – UNPROFOR started deploying in the demilitarized zone and Croatian Army withdrew.

September 17th – at 18:00 hours, the Croatian Army has withdrawn to the pre-September 9th position (before the Medak Pocket Operation started), the first killed were found and cata-

logged, the first destroyed houses and slaughtered cattle registered.

September 19th – General Cot visited the Medak Pocket. UN Spokeswoman quotes his statement of having seen a “scorched earth”.

September 20th – a meeting takes place aboard the British aircraft carrier “Invincible” somewhere in the Adriatic Sea – all political leaders are present – the participants of the war in the former Yugoslavia. A few days later the Croatian and “Krajina” side agree upon secret negotiations to be held in Norway. To the organizer’s surprise Serb representatives make this information public during TV interviews. That form of acquired international legitimacy suited the Serb side. They did not burden themselves with possible meeting failures and wanted to be recognized as an equal partner. This is why Owen blames the failure of the talks on the Croatian side, because the “Croat Army’s forces killed Serbs in the Medak Pocket. The UN fairly extensively documented the serious human right violations done in the Medak Pocket, which inflicted great damage on the Republic of Croatia.”⁹³ Even President Tuđman’s peace initiative, which Croatia proposed to the UN, was referred to Owen as *“a manoeuvre by which the world’s public opinion should be swayed away from recently discovered crimes.”*

At the end of September, UNPROFOR’s mandate expired, vivid consultations followed and a consensus tried to be reached at the UN itself. In the days that followed: September 30th, October 1st and 4th, three Resolutions were voted on. Resolution 869, regarded a 24-hour mandate extension. Resolution 870 enforced UNPROFOR security because its new mandate was put under chapter 7 of the UN Charter concerning “peace enforcing”. Finally the third, Resolution 871, UNPROFOR’s mandate had been separated on Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia and three subordinate HQ’s were established under one central command. This marked a great Croatian diplomatic success. Croatia, although being under severe accusations especially after the UNPROFOR SITREPORT from October 7th 1993 about the Medak Pocket⁹⁴, had unequivocally, even in the eyes of UN, become a sovereign country.

The diplomatic efforts and negotiations continued. From October 28th to November 31st 1993 Stoltenberg met with Presidents Tuđman and Milošević in Zagreb and Belgrade. David Owen met Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Šušak in London on October 11th. On October 29th EU Foreign Ministers in Geneva met with Presidents Milošević, Tuđman, Bulatović and Izetbegović and later with leaders Karadžić and Boban in Geneva as well. On December 31st, co-presidents of the IC for the former Yugoslavia again met with the conflict’s protagonists. The following day, they

all met with EU ministers and co-presidents in Brussels. The international community's efforts would bare some deceptive and temporary fruit – the peace process for Croatia would result in a general ceasefire agreement and the Zagreb treaty in 1994. But for the Serb side, that would only mean one more tactical manoeuvre to appease the international community and make it believe that the Serbs were ready to co-operate. They had no real intent to return under the Croatian state's sovereignty. The so-called "RSK" only wished for a quick unification with "RS" and with FR Yugoslavia to take place. The solution that Croatia would take at some future date, all the diplomatic efforts and successes aside, was again a military one. In the spring and summer of 1995, the Republic of Croatia will in the span of only a few days use the military and police action "Bljesak" and "Oluja" to solve all the problems the UN and the IC have not been able to solve for years.